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Essays--Field

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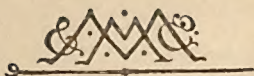
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THE WORKS OF
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ESSAYS



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ESSAYS

FIELDING : SMOLLETT : HAZLITT : BURNS
BYRON'S WORLD : 'PIPPIN' : OTHELLO
'T. E. B.' : OLD ENGLAND : BALZAC : HUGO

BY

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

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NOTE

OF the Essays, contained in this volume, the *Henry Fielding* appeared in a complete edition of the novelist's works published in 1903 by Mr. W. Heinemann; the *Smollett* served as an introduction to the edition of Messrs. Constable and Co. (1899); the *Hazlitt* prefaced Mr. Dent's complete edition of that writer's works (1902-4); and the *Robert Burns* was printed as a 'Terminal Essay' in the Centenary Edition published by Messrs. T. C. and E. C. Jack in 1896. To these publishers thanks are due for permission, generously given, to reprint.

The biographical sketches, here entitled *Byron's World*, served as notes to an edition of Byron's Letters, of which one volume only was published by Mr. W. Heinemann in 1897; the *Othello*, printed in 1903, has not been traced to the place of its original publication; the other Essays, included in this volume, made their first appearance in the *Pall Mall Magazine*. We take this opportunity of making the proper acknowledgments.

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HENRY FIELDING

1707-1754

THEY are not few that have dealt with Henry Fielding's work and fame ; but not too many of them have done the best by him. The most of his life is, and must ever remain unknown to us ; and in the absence of accredited facts, men have had to make inferences, and the most of these have failed to stand the tests of reflection and time. Was our premier Novelist an habitual 'bulker': a party, that is, who slept on public benches, or butcher's stalls, or the like open air conveniences, among thieves, and buttocks, and beggars, for the sole reason that he had nowhere else to sleep? ¹ Did he play Bilkum in fact, and tap a real Stormandra for his share of her fees in the service of a living, breathing Mother Punchbowl? Was he used to blow a trumpet at a booth in Bartlemy Fair? All these villainies were laid to his charge (for a frantic Scotchman is no respecter of God, or Man, or History), and all are demonstrably false. Smollett (the aforesaid frantic Scotchman), who wrote of him

¹ Of course, he may have bulked it once and again for fun. I myself . . . But who has not ?

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in his lifetime, wrote in so violent a passion that, his humour being for the moment in abeyance, he could not see that, in dealing as he did with a superior, he was simply revealing himself for a person sick with envy and vanity ; and Richardson, who also wrote of him in his lifetime, wrote also as a megalomaniac, and with a feminine acidity in his madness, a sort of elderly-maiden-lady ruffianism in intention and effect, which admirers of *Clarissa* are at some pains to dissemble. There are glimpses of him in his cousin, the Lady Mary Montagu, and these, if they be kindly on the whole, are on the whole contemptuous ;¹ there are others in Horace Walpole, that Faddle of genius, whom God and his opportunities made the best letter-writer in Eighteenth-Century England ; there is one magnificent reference, as it were a leaf from Apollo's laurel bough, in Gibbon. Comes Arthur Murphy, the Editor of the first collected Edition (1764), an excellent creature, but one not well acquainted with Fielding's life, nor able, had he been so acquainted, Mr. Boswell's inimitable performance being still undone, to make use of his knowledge to any particular advantage ; comes Sir Walter, who writes as your right Scot will, and frankly prefers his countryman above the 'Englisher,' though in the

¹ Cf. her taunt that he was capable of 'sharing a rapture with his maid.' Mr. Saintsbury's comment on this takes the shape of a quotation :—'Which many has.' 'Tis but three words long ; yet is it long enough. Her Ladyship, by the way, had a mortal contempt for Mr. Pope, the poet ; but she nowhere goes so far as to reproach him with his capacity for 'sharing a rapture' with a tainted harlot. (See *post*, pp. 29-31, my note on Colley Cibber.) But then, you see, Mr. Pope had begun by solemnly, even ardently, making love to her ; and, so far as we know, her cousin had not.

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long-run, being Sir Walter, he is constrained to write Fielding down 'the Father of the English Novel'; comes Thackeray with that achievement in portraiture of his, a piece of work delightful as literature but wholly disloyal to letters; come Lawrence and Keightley, who want to learn whatever may be learned, and in their need go far to redeem our world from the reproach of knowing nothing of one of its greatest men; comes Sir Leslie Stephen, 'a good man, good at many things,' who knows and loves his Fielding, and says the wisest and the most affectionate things of him, yet cannot refrain from making comparisons, and finding resemblances, between Fielding, the immitigable Ironist, and Thackeray, the unmitigated Sentimentalist, which make you wonder how and why in the world he contrives to be so affectionate and so wise as he is. Meanwhile the Figure The figure itself. itself remains legendary, vague, obscure. Was there a Lady Bellaston in his life? Who knows? Yet the chances are that there was. Who cares? Did he smoke so furiously that he needed nothing but the wrappings of his tobacco for the manuscript paper of his very solid Five Volumes of *Théâtre*? Was he commonly drunk, always begrimed with snuff, and ever bending the stiles along his path up Parnassus Hill with no better dunnage than a yard of clay and a flask of champagne? Thackeray's charming but (in the circumstances) really rascally discovery of him made strongly for these last conclusions; for Thackeray, you see, knew all about the Eighteenth Century, and was good at Grub Street, and had all but published with Lintot and

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Cave. So the Middle-Victorian feeling against the Author of *Tom Jones* was strong ; so strong that Lord Houghton (himself a man with an idiosyncrasy which demanded privacy) writing of Thackeray dead, could actually refer to him as 'Fielding without the manners' dross.'¹ It sounds incredible ; yet so it is. And, for my part, I cannot be emphatic enough in my praise of them that have done what they could to discredit this affecting perversion of life, and character, and fact. Mr. Saintsbury, for one, has brushed it aside : not without a twinge of conscience, I imagine, as becomes a *fervent* of Thackeray ; but critically and finally.² Still, the first great effort to redeem our Fielding from the reproach affixed upon him by the inheritor of his province in art, his genius, his

¹ So, too, Miss Brontë : who compared him to a vulture (the 'eagle' of her antithesis being W. M. T.), talked of his taste for carrion, and professed to discern terrific potentialities for mischief and illiberality (especially in his contemplation of his female friends) in the shape of his lower jaw. It is pretty evident that the impassioned spinster knew nothing of what she was talking about ; but it is also pretty evident that she followed the trend of her time. On the whole one is not sorry that her 'eagle' found her dull, and escaped her society for the Garrick, as soon as ever (with an approach to politeness) he could.

² Mr. Saintsbury is nearly always correct about Fielding. A whiff, for instance, and he disposes, once and for ever, of what Sir Walter (who is quite prepared to believe it of Fielding, by the way : though I think he would have stiffened his back and bronzed his brow against it, had it been told of Smollett) rightly terms that 'humiliating anecdote,' which is related by Horace Walpole on the authority of such political and social scum as Rigby and Peter Bathurst : I mean the story of Fielding at supper, in company with a dirty cloth, a ham-bone and a mutton-bone in one dish, a blind man, a whore, and three Irishmen. A touch of Mr. Saintsbury's finger ; and 'tis seen to be, while good enough Horace Walpole, entirely incredible history.

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cynicism, and the rest—('his wit, his humour, his pathos, and his umbrella')—was Mr. Austin Dobson, in that excellent monograph which he contributed to the 'English Men of Letters' Series (1883). I may think Mr. Dobson is rather more apologetical than he needs to be: that, in dealing with this great man apart from his works, he also is somewhat Middle-Victorian in mood and effect. But his is a brave book, all the same: and none can read it without learning as much of Fielding as will probably be known this side Doomsday. Many may write, and many will write (as I hope), about this Man among Men of ours; but howsoever many they be, there is none but will owe a great deal to the good Poet and fine Scholar to whom 'tis due.

Mr. Dobson's
monograph.

I

It was long the fashion: a fashion to which Gibbon gave the weight of his serene assurance and immense authority: to treat the Feildings¹ as descended from a Hapsburg. This fashion is now discredited; but there is no doubt that the greatest of them sprang from an ancient and gallant stock, and came from forebears distinguished in English life and history. I am not concerned with the passage of the Feildings through the years. It is enough to begin with Sir William, created Earl of

Fielding's
descent.

¹ So the name is still spelled, I believe, by the Denbighs—the ruling branch. Fielding's retort upon a Denbigh, who asked why he wrote his name with the 'i' before the 'e'—(that he supposed it was because his branch was the first that learned to spell)—leaves the question exactly where it was.

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Denbigh, who married Susan Villiers, sister to George, First Duke of Buckingham ; died for his King in Rupert's rush on Birmingham ; and left behind him two sons, Basil and George. The first of these, a vigorous yet independent Roundhead, married wisely and variously,¹ lived to a great age, and dying without issue, passed on the Earldom of Denbigh to William, his nephew, second son of his brother George. This same George was raised to the Irish Peerage as Viscount Callan, 'with succession to the Earldom of Desmond' ; and his fifth son, John, who entered the Church, and became Canon of Salisbury, and Chaplain to William III., took to wife Bridget, daughter of Scipio Cokain, of Somersetshire, by whom he had issue three sons and three daughters. His third son, Edmund, followed the wars, served with distinction under Marlborough, and made a match, whether runaway or not remains obscure, with Sarah, daughter of Sir Henry Gould, Knight, of Sharpham Park, Somerset, a Judge of the King's Bench. And at Sharpham Park, on the 22nd April 1707, there was born to these two that Harry Fielding who is known to us as the Father of the English Novel, or (as Byron put it) 'the prose Homer of human nature.'²

His father. Edmund Fielding may, or may not, have been what his contemporaries would have called 'a queer bitch.' Inasmuch as he fought well under Marlborough, as I have said, and died a Major-General,

¹ Either he was, or he might have been, responsible for no less than four several Countesses of Denbigh.

² A niece of Dr. John's, the Lady Mary Pierrepont, was afterwards the renowned Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In effect, she was Harry Fielding's second cousin.

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the chances are that he was not exactly *that*. But there is a suspicion that he was by way of being something in that line ; for in 1706 his father-in-law bequeathed to Harry Fielding's mother a fortune of £3000—(to be invested either in the 'purchase of a Church or Colledge lease, or of lands of Inheritance')—for her sole use, he (Edmund) having 'nothing to doe with it.' Sir Henry knew his namesake and grandson, for he did not die till 1710 ; when Edmund and his wife removed from Sharpham Park to a house in East Stour (or Stower) in Dorsetshire. There other children were born to them, notably Sarah, author of *David Simple* and a valued correspondent of the celebrated Mr. Richardson,¹ and there in 1780, when Harry was somewhere about eleven years old, his mother died. That is all that is known. Whether Edmund Fielding did, or did not, stay on in the pleasant house at East Stour none living can tell ; and they that bet on the event do so in an utter lack of information. But, speaking with perfect caution—(that is to say, with the voice of Mr. Austin Dobson)—'it is clear that the greater part of Harry Fielding's childhood must have been spent "by the banks of sweetly-winding Stour" . . . to which he subsequently refers in *Tom Jones*.' Also, it is recorded that his education at this time was the work of the Rev. Mr. Oliver : presumably 'the clergyman of Motcombe, a neighbouring village.' According to Murphy, Oliver sat for Parson

His first
tutor.

¹ Who insulted her in her brother, the victorious author of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, as only an underbred, agitated, offended citling could.

ESSAYS

Trulliber ; but I had rather think that on this point, as on others, Murphy was mistaken. 'Tis to be noted (for one thing) that Harry Fielding, while something of a pedant, was an excellent classical scholar. I cannot believe that he learned to become one at Eton. I make bold to conclude that, whoever it was that took on the brilliant, apprehensive, inquiring youngster, he could not choose but do his best with the material at his hand. Now, if Oliver were the Trulliber whose sole concern was pigs and pig's-wash, then one of two things is certain: either Fielding, the most generous and the most upright of men and writers, very horribly maligned him ; or Trulliber (pig-dealer and pork-butcher ; sow-gelder *à ses heures*) was not Oliver ; and Arthur Murphy, meaning quite handsomely by all parties, as is the manner of his kind, here said the thing which was not, and so did mischief now past repair.

At Eton. Well grounded, however : whether by Trulliber-Oliver or by another : in due course Fielding went to Eton. Here he remained for certain years, no 'Colleger' (one harboured within) but an 'Oppidan' (a scholar boarded in the town) ; here, 'with true *Spartan* fortitude,' as he remarks, he sometimes sacrificed at that 'birchen altar' dear so long to the High-Priests of Science ; here he met his fast friends, George Lyttelton, Winnington, and Charles Hanbury (afterwards Hanbury Williams), and had for his contemporaries Henry Fox, and William Pitt (Pitt, the Great Commoner ; Pitt the sublime Lord Chatham!), with, it may be, Gilbert West, who translated Pindar, and little

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Tommy Arne, who was afterwards to write the music of *Artaxerxes* and *Rule Britannia*, and many a classic in English song besides ; and here, in the noble, if ambiguous, speech of the illustrious Mr. Gray (himself an Etonian, of a somewhat later date), he 'chased the rolling circle's speed' and 'urged the flying ball' with all the energy that

Buxom health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever new,
And lively cheer of vigour born,

could give. I know not (nobody does) the date of his reception ;¹ but I have had several lads of genius through my hands, and I make bold to say that here came his Choice of Hercules, and that that choice was hardly one which would commend itself to Minerva. There is nothing to guide one, nothing to illuminate, nothing to suggest. But women are women ; such boys as the boy Fielding, seld-seen or not, are ever occurring ; and Fielding's mind was in the main an experimenting, an observing, a debating mind. Is Molly Seagrim Mr. Jones's first ? If she be, then assuredly, I take it, there is not near so much likeness between Jones and Fielding as has hitherto been perceived. In Fielding's life and work, the Accidental Woman takes her place, and gets her due. That is one of the many things which mark him off from other English novelists. Of itself, the point is unimportant. Boyhood counts for little or nothing in the development of sentimental Man, and Youth for very little more. It is only when Manhood lays

¹ Mr. Dobson conjectures that he was entered soon after his mother's death.

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hold upon a boy that Woman begins to count : till then she is but a sensation and a jest. But to be a Man is to be conscious of a heart ; and with, and in, that consciousness your rakish Youngster becomes a decent Male, and (forgetting his experiences) looks round for Somebody with whom to fall in love. That, as I think, was Fielding's case ; as it has been the case of many millions of lusty lads besides. To put things plainly, I think that he had learned his grammar thoroughly before he went to Eton ; and I am fully prepared to meet him when, on his departure thence, he falls over head and ears in love with Miss Sarah Andrew.

A boyish
romance.

She was a 'fortune and a beauty,' as they said in those days ; she lived at Lyme Regis ; she was a lonely, lovely orphan ; one Andrew Tucker was her guardian. It was so desperate a business while it lasted that, though the lover was but eighteen or so, (but, like the abducting Rochester before him, he cannot but have been an uncommonly handsome and brilliant boy), the Young Lady herself was sent away out of his reach ; while the Young Lady's Guardian was moved to protest (in an affidavit) that he went in fear of his life on account of young Mr. Fielding and his man, which latter 'he feared would beat, maim, or kill him.' Is young Mr. Fielding's man a far-away vision of Black George ? I love to think so ; but evidence, much less proof, is wanting. What is certain is that Miss Andrew, having been deposited for safety with another Guardian, one Rhodes of Modbury, in South Devon, was presently married off out of harm's way to one of Rhodes's sons ; had several children ; and was

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afterwards honoured among the Tuckers and the Rhodeses as the original of Sophia Western. Of course, she was nothing of the sort ; for, as we all know, Fielding was at some pains to make it history that, in essentials and particulars alike, Sophia Western was none other than his first wife, Charlotte Cradock. But it is scarce possible to doubt that Mrs. Rhodes, who, at the time of affidaviting, was a damsel of fifteen (she died in 1783, being then some three and seventy years old), shared, if she did not encourage, the delusion ; for it is a fact that Woman, whatever her age, and whatever her fashion, dearly loves being written about in books, and that Ronsard's lovely sonnet—

‘ Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la
chandelle ’—

enshrines and glorifies an eternal truth. I do not for a moment think that, however romantical the Fielding of Lyme Regis, he knew thus much : and I am equally sure that the lady did not. But by the time that *Tom Jones* appeared, both he and she were wiser. Both were some thirty years older ; but the woman was by that much the worse for life, while the man, his eye on immortality, had so far learned his lesson that Miss Andrew was at best a pleasant memory, and he was conscious of nothing vitally glorious in the past except the girl he had married ; loved to distraction ; honoured with motherhood ; spree'd with ; starved with ; betrayed (it may be ; I know not) ; and seen die.

Meanwhile he had done enough. A lad of eighteen, he had been foiled in a fine, scandalous Its consequences.

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attempt at abduction ; he had seen a fortune and a beauty violently removed from his neighbourhood, and married out of hand with a view to making him impossible ; and he had been bound over to keep the peace by an elderly gentleman, who went in bodily fear of young Mr. Fielding and his follower. He rose to the situation (or Edmund Fielding rose for him) ; and, instead of going to Oxford or Cambridge, as in the ordinary course of things he would have done, he went to Leyden to read law under 'the learned Vitriarius.' Also, he 'took it out of' Miss Andrew by translating a part of Juvenal's Sixth Satire 'in English Burlesque Verse,' in the manner of Mr. Butler's *Hudibras*. It will be owned, I think, that this was not the revenge of a desperate man.¹

¹ Austin Dobson : *Fielding* (New York), Appendix I. It was Keightley who unearthed old Tucker's affidavit. It was sworn the 14th of November 1725, before John Bowdidge, Mayor of Lyme Regis ; with the result that Henry Fielding, Gent, and his 'servant or companion, Joseph Lewis,' were bound over to keep the peace, insomuch as the said 'Andrew Tucker, Gent, one of the Corporation,' was 'in fear of his life of some bodily hurt to be done or to be procured to be done to him by H. Fielding and his man.' Further : it was a Tucker tradition that Andrew of that ilk considered himself hardly used by Rhodes of Modbury, for the reason that, all the while he was going in fear of his life, etc., he was resolving that Miss Andrew should marry his own son. One Davidson, a Devon antiquary, is responsible (under an 'it is said') for the statement that Fielding (his 'companion or servant,' no doubt, aiding and abetting) 'made a desperate attempt to carry the lady off by force on a Sunday, when she was on her way to Church.' Last of all, as Miss Andrew's mother and the mother of Sarah Gould were in some sort connected, the Chloe and Strephon of this highly romantic business appear to have been a kind of cousins. Why in the *Théâtre* of Henry Fielding is there no comedy called *The Rival Guardians* ?

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II

NOBODY knows how long Fielding remained under the wing of the learned Vitriarius, nor, when the learned Vitriarius was doing something else than lecture, exactly how he employed himself. It is said, however, that he worked hard at the 'civilians'; and it is history that he had his eye upon the drama, and brought back with him the first draft of his *Don Quixote in England*.¹ It is plain that, if any Dutch maiden attracted him, the affair was attended by no memories, whether humorous or tragic, nor issued in any more translations from the Roman Satirists; and it is also plain that neither the country nor the people made any sort of impression on him; for I recall but a single reference to either in his afterwork.² I suppose, with others, that when he did return to England, he returned because he could not count on ready money from his father—(who had married a second time, and was begetting a second family with all the lustiness of a British soldier)—and was unable to pay his lodgings and his fees. At any rate, return he did; and, being by this time a handsome, vigorous, inspiring creature, over six feet high, shaped (the inference is) like one of his own heroes, dark-haired and dark-eyed, with a presence, and a temperament, and a tongue, he plunged, and plunged again, and yet again plunged into the roar-

Student at
Leyden.

His return
to London.

¹ As his formal comedy, *Love in Several Masques*, was played while he was yet in his twentieth year, it seems highly probable that it also was at least begun at Leyden.

² I forget for the moment where it occurs. But the inspiration of it is merely the stenches of a Dutch canal.

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ing, rioting pool of early Georgian London. His nominal income was one of £200 a year ; but it came from his father, and, as he himself remarked of it, anybody might pay it that would : so that, men and women being what they are, and have always been, I see no reason to doubt that he knew Lady Bellaston at first-hand, and, on occasion, was no more carefully concerned to reject the favours of Miss Matthews than was Lieutenant Booth. I may be slandering him ; but I do not think that he himself would have either said or thought so, and I am sure that Balzac, whom he anticipated at more than one point, and in whose theory of Fiction as a right expression of Life the Woman who gives, and the Man who takes, are essential elements, would, had he been consulted, have explained (at great length) that human intercourse is largely conducted on these lines ;¹ and if M. de Fielding had not, on occasion, vied with MM. Henri de Marsay, and Lucien de Rubempré, and Maxime de Trailles, and

¹ In point of fact, the outcry against Mr. Jones's acceptance of money from Lady Bellaston, 'for value received,' is largely, if not wholly, an effect of cant. Such connexions, such fine confusions of beatitude and gratitude, have existed at least since Woman began to assert herself as Man's complement and equal ; nor, if you clear your mind of Puritan hysteria, and think it out, is there any reason, especially if you consider the practice of the whole civilised world, during many hundreds of years : Puritanism (or, better still, the Prudery which is the worst and most mischievous effect of Puritanism) always excepted : why there should be. This apart, however : it is certain that such connexions are common yet in all civilised polities ; and it is shrewdly suspected that, even in England, their morality and convenience are found immensely less unnatural in fact than they are in fiction : so that a real Jones were not nearly so much to blame for taking real money in an inkhorn, real life from a real Lady Bellaston, as he is in taking money from Lady Bellaston, as the mere hero of a novel.

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the rest of those brilliant blackguards which we know, he would have been at best the 'good buffalo' of Taine's report. Of course, Fielding was no more La Palférine, nor Nathan, nor de Marsay, than he was the 'good buffalo'; and, of course, we cannot get behind that much of his autobiography which he chose to publish in his novels. But it is evident that one of his merits is his hold on Character and Life: especially upon Life and Character as they are shaped and determined by the uses and the circumstances of Society. Men and women, as I have said, and as everybody knows, are pretty much now what they were then; as then they were pretty much what they have always been. And I no more doubt that the Matthews and Bellaston episodes were profitable to Fielding: profitable and deemed in no sort reprehensible: than I doubt that their author wrote the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, every sentence in which is stamped the utterance of a humane, stately, and honourable gentleman.

Be this as it may, 'young ravens must have food'; and if this particular young raven differed from others, his brethren, at this point, it was that, having far larger appetites than they, he needed a fuller choice and a steadier supply of victuals. As he could get nothing from his father, and was therefore debarred that study of the Law to which, as his grandsire's namesake and firstborn grandson, he was perhaps devoted from his birth, he presently found himself face to face with an 'extensive and peculiar' difficulty. Should he turn hackney-writer? Should he turn hackney-coachman? So

Hackney-
writer or
hackney-
coachman?

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he says himself ; and, however considerable his gift with cattle may have been, I take it none can wonder that he took to persuading men and women rather than to driving hacks. In truth, there was no choice for him. Even in Grub Street the literary calling was not without its genteel elements. The loosest and arrantest of them that 'wrote for the book-sellers' ; the men who sold their shirts for tripe and gin, and cut themselves armholes in a blanket, or a sack, to shelter them while they rapped out translations from Xenophon or Tacitus, or wasted their ink in speculation as to the economic future of the Realm, or in essays on *The Effect of the Precious Metals on the Conduct and Conscience of Mankind* : even these wretches, I say, could call themselves scholars and gentlemen, and, if they pawned, and starved, and cadged, and potted, could always do so on the argument that their profession was honourable, and that they themselves, however unfortunate, yet chiefly suffered by reason of the dull and stupid self-esteem of the Mobility, for which they wrote, and the rapacity of the Book-seller, whose business it was to keep the Mobility going in the matter of Polite Letters, and to pay his furnishers as little as he might, at the same time that he extorted from them every scrap of 'copy' which their famished intellectuals would yield. Plainly, Fielding had no choice : he must turn to literature, or perish. So to literature he turned. And, being young, and therefore foolish ; being ignorant, and therefore unwise ; having nothing to the purpose but high spirits, a bowing acquaintance with certain languages, and a versatile and clever turn for imita-

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tion ; he did as all the adventurous youngsters have done who ever attempted Letters, and took to writing for the Stage.

III

'Twas a courageous thing to do : and it might, had The Stage. he been such an *homme du théâtre* as Dumas was afterwards : Dumas, or even Sheridan ; to say nothing of Vanbrugh and Wycherley before : it might, I say, have taken him to fame and fortune. But, for one thing, he was far too young for anything but apprenticeship to this most difficult of trades ; and, for another, he had few touches of the Stage in him, and neither saw its true inwardness nor divined the means which heaven-born dramatists use to secure their ends. To him, in the beginning at all events ; to him, as I see him in these years ; a play was a form of literature in five divisions, called Acts. It was written in dialogue ; and in writing it, therefore, you might be as facetious, or as irrelevant, or as pointed as you liked, since in these modes of composition, you were, or you thought you were, presenting Character. Then, having presented character through some three or four Acts : in the course of which you suggested a couple of adulteries, and brangled together as many absurd and futile intrigues as your scheme would comprehend, on the pretext, and with the idea, that you were painting Manners ; you made, in your Fifth Act, a kind of *amende honorable* to your persecuted Hero. And Mrs. Takewell went to the right hand, and Mrs. Shakewell to the left hand ;

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and the hideous old guardian, Justice Gripewell, was confounded and bamboozled ; and Filchwell (the valet) brought in a box of deeds ; and Pinchwell (the chamber-maid) volunteered a confession ; and Mr. Valentine and the lovely and blushing, but not too innocent, Aurelia were made happy for life. A caricature? Why not? Caricature or not, I cannot see that, in the matter of Formal Comedy, Fielding, though he did other things on other lines, ever got beyond the Theory of Drama herein contained and expressed. Indeed, he took that theory very seriously ; did his best to live up to it ; and sometimes succeeded, more or less, in his endeavour. But in the end, the thing about him to be got from his plays is that, if he were (as he was) the very Genius of the Novel, that terrible entity the *homme du théâtre*, whose absence has wrecked so many ambitions, was not included in his magnificent and various endowment.

The Taste of
the Town.

When, at twenty, he produced his *Love in Several Masques*, the Gods of Comedy were dead, and the Town was running mad on that entertaining bastard, *The Beggar's Opera*. Congreve and Wycherley were ancient history. Farquhar's last and best comedy, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, had been produced by Mr. Wilks in 1707, the year of our neophyte's birth. Even Cibber—the popular Actor-Manager-Author: as who should say the Georgian or Early-English Dion Boucicault ; the Cibber of Mawworm and Dr. Cantwell, of Sir Novelty Fashion and Sir Charles Easy—was himself a kind of relic, or antiquity. Vanbrugh, our most humorous, most vivid, most generous and

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abundant stage-humourist since Fletcher, was newly dead, and his posthumous *Journey to London*—‘faked,’ perverted, finished, by ‘Old King Coll’—had, as *The Provok’d Husband*, given the thrice-admirable Mrs. Oldfield one of her last and greatest opportunities (1727). But his best play, *The Provok’d Wife*, dated from 1697, while his *Relapse*, a master’s descendant on certain trifling themes set forth in Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*: his *Relapse*, with Hoyden and Foppington, with Berinthia, and Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, and the Nurse: was but a year younger; and his *Confederacy*, that inoubliable reminder that the Comic Muse is naturally no better than she should be, dated as far back as 1705. Of course the good men were about, and in the air. Wycherley, I take it, had passed: ’twas a big, lusty English brute, with a rare sense of the Stage, and a *vis comica* never so well shown as in his grossest offences against accepted morals,—such as they were. But there was always Congreve, the boldest, the wittiest, the most deliberately literary of them all: Congreve, so truly the heir of Jonson that his diversions, his asides, his accidents, his incidental scenes, his studies in humour, his English, remain incomparable to this day. There was Farquhar, a kind of prose Fletcher, with his velleities of romance, his dissolute, kindly humour, his mastery of a certain sort of character, his turn for telling speech, his unalterable disposition to see everything in the rosiest, the most sparkish, the most gallant light. Last of all there was Sir John Vanbrugh; and I think that in Sir John, young Harry Fielding might very well have found that he wanted. For

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our Man among Men was not at all romantically given: he cared nothing for that sort of gay and adventurous, yet poignant, contrast of character and event, which Farquhar set forth in *The Inconstant*, and *The Twin-Rivals*; so Farquhar was not for him. As for Congreve, well—! ‘Il ne fait pas ce tour qui veut.’ In such matters as expression and invention, is not even Sheridan’s a poor reflected glory beside Congreve’s? And *The School for Scandal*, however gallantly it go, does it contrast effectually with *The Way of the World* and *Love for Love*? And how should this masterly and vigorous, yet rare and exquisite, craftsman attract your ‘prentice-hand in any but the worst sense and to the fondest end? In fact the sole and only model left to Fielding was Vanbrugh; and he, with all his deep and all his surface qualities, was every whit as hopeless an exemplar as the rest; inasmuch as in his composition there was intensely and especially included that aforesaid *homme du théâtre*, an appreciable strain of whom had somehow been omitted from Fielding’s.

Vanbrugh
and
Fielding.

The two men had much in common; but their effects are never so far apart, their results exhibit never so glaring a discrepancy, as when each is drawing on their common heritage. As regards Morality, for instance: both are lewd in fancy, abrupt in treatment, coarse in intention and effect. But Vanbrugh’s lewdness is amusing, Fielding’s is dull; Vanbrugh’s method is brilliant and exhilarating, Fielding’s is seldom either one or other; Vanbrugh’s effects, his *jeux de scène*, his processes and conclusions, are essentially dramatic, while

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Fielding's—well, are they for the most part worth a thought?¹ A better way to mark the essential difference between the two is to consider them in their several methods of treating Character, and to this end I will take each man in his peculiar province: Vanbrugh on the Stage, Fielding in the Novel. And taking them thus, I stop on the one hand at Sir John Brute, on the other at Squire Western. No contrast could be more instructive. The Novelist literally plays with Western: he knows him ever so intimately, yet his introduction of him seems almost careless; he shows him a tyrant and a ruffian and a sot; yet he has ever a kindly, and at the same time a leisurely, half-laughing, half-reticent mastery of his creation, which he never permits to get out of hand; so that he is able, on occasion, to assert, and to make us assent to, such an outrageous familiarity as that of the boxing of Squire Western's ears, by a person unnamed, whose sole title to credence is that, being an officer and a gentleman, he is as well acquainted with Squire Western as Squire Western's creator.² Now, with

¹ As Fielding's, yes, a thousand times. As stage-stuff, no. I except the Burlesques: *Tom Thumb the Great* and *The Covent Garden Tragedy*. Both are masterpieces; but in both the interest is largely literary and pedantic; it has but a kind of rotting acquaintance with human nature; the Poet-in-Charge is rather gibling and japing a certain mode of literary activity, and therewith a select few among his literary brethren, than doing anything for English Comedy. In other words, the Drama of Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, Hoadly, Cibber (even), Sheridan, is in divers ways and degrees an expression of Life. Fielding's Burlesques, which are the best of his *Théâtre*, are but a criticism of one side, one aspect, one ambition of a particular expression of Art.

² That is to say, a great deal better than Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Saintsbury. Sir Walter thought that Mr. Western

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Western contrast that other most excellent study in Georgian English ; I mean Sir John Brute. No purpose would be served by disarticulating or anatomising the Somersetshire squire and the London mohock. My concern is with methods ; and I ask you to note how, while Fielding's Western is always presenting himself, yet is not once fully presented, so that, to get a complete impression of him you have to take the *History of a Foundling* first and last : in *The Provok'd Wife* Vanbrugh presents his Brute from the beginning in such terms that misunderstanding is impossible.¹ The character, that is to say, leaps instantly into life and energy and colour, complete as Pallas springing from the brows of Zeus. A dramatist, a Comic Poet, has passed, and after that first speech of Sir John's, you could swear to your Brute among ten thousand.

Novel and
Play.

I will not do Fielding such an injustice as to compare anything in his plays and this masterpiece of dramatic presentation. But let us go a little further : let us compare the Novelist and the Comic Poet ; let us take the immortal scenes between Western and his Sister and the scene in which Sir John and Constant begin to tell each other what they

ought to have retaliated ; Mr. Saintsbury (speaking, he says, as a Tory) agrees, and seems to think this inimitable and daring touch the Novelist's 'one slip.' For myself, I am, like Mr. Dobson, of Mr. Fielding's party : for the reason that he knew his Western, and that his Western, if we are to accept him at all, must be accepted on his terms.

¹ *The Provok'd Wife*, Act I. Scene I. *A room in Sir John Brute's house.* Enter SIR JOHN BRUTE. SIR JOHN. 'What cloying meat is love, when matrimony is the sauce to it,' etc.

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must about my Lady. These scenes are the true apotheosis of the Western family: the Squire and his Sister are handled with an understanding, an adroitness, a mastery alike of male brutality and female imbecility, a command of English as it ought never to be spoken except in novels, which make them one of the best good things in letters; and you take them to yourself, with the reflection that this is how the good man, sure of his method and master of his material, *does*. Does, that is, when he is writing a novel. But how if the same good man set out to write a play? And how would this gem of fiction sparkle on the boards? The answer is instant and unqualified: it would not sparkle at all. It could not: not even though, at a given point, the Squire should 'suit the action to the word,' and thereby make himself a shrined Saint for all the Naturalists in Time. Now, Sir John Brute is a frank and violent blackguard; he is also a villainous drunkard; he is (further) a rake of the dirtiest habit; and he hates, insults, and despises his wife, as lively a person as Vanbrugh can make her, for the sole reason that she is his wife. She, my Lady, is pursued (much to her contentment) by one Constant; and in the end comes one of the completest scenes in English Comedy. Constant and Lady Brute, supported by Heartfree, Constant's friend, and Belinda, Sir John's niece, are taking tea, and talking agreeable treason. *Alarum. Excursions.* The two gentlemen are dissembled in my Lady's closet; and to my Lady and Belinda enters Sir John—(who has been beating and despoiling citizens, and has passed the night in a cell, and is

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fresh from the hands of a scandalised Justice and an astonished Constable)—as drunk, as filthy, as cynical and detestable as a man may be. At a wink from the Comic Spirit, Sir John, insisting on ‘some of your cold tea, Wife,’ breaks open the closet, and Messrs. Heartfree and Constant emerge. Sir John is magnificent : drunk as he is, he rises to the situation, and is magnificent. But, says Constant in effect, after giving a lucid yet inexpressibly futile explanation of things : ‘If you don’t choose to believe all this, Sir, why, then, I wear a sword’ ; and so departs with Heartfree, leaving Lady Brute and Belinda to face the storm. To these Sir John : wickedly drunk, yet with a fine eye for facts, and the strongest sense imaginable of his own position, as determined by the other man’s announcement that he wears a sword : to these, and to himself, Sir John :—‘Wear a sword, Sir? And what of all that, Sir?’ . . . I dare quote no further. But he that runs may read ; and he that doth so read may, having first of all rejoiced in Miss Western and the Squire, as being among the best the English Novel contains, go search me all the plays that Fielding wrote for a speech that on the stage would mean one-fortieth so much, or a part that would play one-fortieth so well. The conclusion is inevitable. Fielding’s Rambles and Veromils, his Sotmores and his Millamours, his Guzzles and Rufflers, his Positive Traps, and Bellamants, and the rest, are stuff ground out for the Stage to keep some actors in parts and a certain ‘young raven’ we know of in mutton and champagne ; while Vanbrugh’s Sir John is stuff done for the Stage for the very simple reason

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that it could not possibly, any more than *Othello* and *Hamlet* could, be done for anything else.

I shall not attempt to analyse the several essays Comedy,
Farce, and
Translation. in Formal Comedy, Farce, Translation, Burlesque, and Political Satire which Fielding made, between *Love in Several Masques* (1727), which was exalted by Oldfield, Wilks, and Cibber, and *The Wedding Day* (1743), which not even Garrick and Woffington and Macklin could keep from sinking. With this last (there was a posthumous play, called *The Fathers: or The Good-Natured Man*) his varied, picturesque, and in some ways interesting career as a writer for the theatres came to a rather poor full close. He is said to have remarked that he left off play-writing at the moment when he ought to have been beginning to write plays. But, for my part, while I am prepared to admit that, if he did speak to this purpose, there was much truth in what he said, I am very glad, for the sake of the English Novel, that he discovered his mistake too late to profit by it. Mr. Dobson has said all there is to say about his five-and-twenty essays in play-writing, and, in denoting *Pasquin*, and *The Author's Farce*, and the Burlesques for special commendation, has left me and the others nothing particular to say. The
Burlesques. For the Burlesques, they are, as I think, unapproachable. In a sense they are echoes; but they are echoes so vocal and so plangent, so wanton and so vigorous, as altogether to drown the Voices that set them calling.¹ For the Ballad-Farces, and some

¹ One, *The Covent Garden Tragedy* (1732), a travesty of Ambrose Philips and Racine, is altogether too naughty and too riotous to be included in any list of *Masterpieces of the*

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of the Formal Comedies, there is this to add : that Fielding knew his London, and in them made as good and profitable an use of it as lay in him to make. Of the Satires, I will but note that they filled his pockets, and—incidentally, at least—suggested to Sir Robert Walpole the creation of that Dramatic Censorship by which, in the person of the Licensor of Plays, the English Stage has ever since his time been throttled. The adaptations from Molière, *The Mock Doctor* (1732) and *The Miser* (1733), are well done ; and what is more, perhaps, they served to increase the reputation of the Miss Catharine Raftor afterwards famous as Mrs. Clive.¹ The latter was a favourite with ‘heavy leads’ as late as the late Sam Phelps.

The Satires.
His failure on the Stage.

But, the Burlesques apart, Fielding’s *Théâtre*, while it displays the Author as a dramatic adventurer of uncommon energy, industry, and

English Drama which an honest critic might essay to eternise. Yet a masterpiece it is ; and the Author was a young fellow of five-and-twenty. The other, *Tom Thumb the Great*, though something more pedantic, is even better fun. It was written when Fielding was twenty-three ; according to Mrs. Pilkington it forced from Swift one of the two laughs of his life ; it had a run of many nights, the last scene being invariably encored ; in a redaction (with songs) by Kane O’Hara, it held the stage for years. Liston was magnificent as Lord Grizzle ; and ‘James,’ said Walter Scott to the elder Ballantyne, on a day in the Year of Grace 1814—‘James,’ he said, ‘I’ll tell you what Byron should say to me, when we are about to accost each other : “Art thou the man whom men famed Grizzle call ?” And then how germane would be my answer : “Art thou the still more famed Tom Thumb the Small ?”’ The quotations are not so much from Fielding as from Kane O’Hara. But certain men of admirable genius—Fielding, Byron, Scott—take hands in them, and I give them for all that means.

¹ I know not if Fielding discovered this remarkable woman. But, if he did not, he did so much for her, having seen her once, that he may fairly be said to have created her.

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versatility, is none the less essentially *oubliable*. I have read it several times ; and every time it has been new to me. New, and dull. I can remember Lord Ogleby and Dr. Cantwell ; I have not forgotten Mrs. Centlivre ; I have, to put my case on higher ground, a good running interest in *The Squire of Alsatia* and *The Suspicious Husband*. But Fielding's heroes and heroines, his rascals and his gulls, his intrigues, his diversions, his attempts at invention, are ever a blank to me : I forget them as I read. And my conclusion is that, while he makes so interesting and respectable a figure as to bulk largely in the history of the English Stage, yet, however timely and enterprising, however *ondoyantes et diverses*, his ambitions were, he left English Drama and the English Stage pretty much as he found them. It is absurd to say that he did not often—(not always ; but often)—do his very best. Drunk or sober, Bellastonised or only 'on' with this lady or that, the man was a serious artist in whatever mode of art he sought for distinction. I take it that he could not—positively *could* not—embark upon a five-act comedy without getting interested in his work ; and to be interested is to do one's best ; and there is enough honest intellectual effort in *The Temple Beau*, or *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, to furnish forth (say) a dozen *Second Mrs. Tanquerays*. But, in the long run, there is but one thing to say of his protracted and laborious experiment : that he was not the man for the work, and that his *Théâtre* is therefore no place for lovers of the play, as Congreve's is, and Farquhar's, and Vanbrugh's. To be content with it, we must

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rather regard it as a burrowing-ground for historians, and antiquaries, and all such persons, whether useful or not, as are interested in the manners and the Stage of Georgian London.

IV

How he
lived.

THUS much of Fielding's Plays. And Life, meanwhile: Life, which at the worst means old mutton and tobacco and champagne, and at the best is a prolonged occasion for self-respect, a luxury which Fielding never lacked, I take it, for more than a day or two at a time? How did the author of *Tom Thumb* and *The Temple Beau* contrive to 'keep his end up' (as we say), and pay his way? Did he come into money through his mother, and had he ever a small but regular income, in addition to that £200 a year which 'anybody might pay who would,' to keep him in shin of beef and 'British Burgundy' and 'Freeman's Best,' when champagne and what goes with it were impossible? We do not know. In his position, and with his opportunities,¹ a modern² would get an actress to pay his debts and mother his failures, or would simply work as some Miss Matthews: with a wealthy 'friend,' and a strong, but wholly imbecile, ambition to make as much of her sex in drama as (say) Mme. Duse makes of her unique temperament and unrivalled

¹ It is to be noted that, whether he hit or missed, he never lacked a stage, but played whatever he did the moment it was done.

² Of course, I mean a modern Frenchman. For who ever heard the like of any Englishman, unless he were the hero of an Eighteenth-Century novel?

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art: would have him work, so that he presently fitted her with a tailor-made part, much as Sardou fits Réjane or Sarah. Fielding, it seems, did neither; though, as I have said, he made all the use he could of the admirable Miss Rafter;¹—and, being an adventurer of resource and parts, played off the idiosyncrasies of Mrs. Charke (Colley's daughter), and Theophilus Cibber (Colley's son), and Quin, and Macklin, and even Colley himself, as well as ever he could. It is pretty certain that he made money by his experiments in drama: for the very simple reason that, if he had not, he could scarce have lived, and must certainly, if one refuse him his Bellastons and his Matthews—(as, of course, in the interests of Purity and Art and Victorian-England one does)—have taken for a livelihood to hackney-coaching after all. For my own part, I wish he had left a diary of his assault upon the Stage. He must, I think, have loved the life, while it lasted; for he is nowhere very severe on any of the trade. The exception is Colley Cibber.² Fielding soon quarrelled, none knows His quarrel with Cibber.

¹ Who was, it is told, a woman of so strict a virtue that her fair fame was never so much as touched by a breath of anything that was not demonstrably Slander.

² Cibber was certainly a man of parts. As an actor of fops and villains, he seems to have had remarkable merit; his perversion of *Richard the Third* held water for something like a couple of centuries, and was played by Garrick, Kean, Macready, everybody, down to the day when Sir Henry Irving sent it to Limbo for ever; in Vanbrugh's hands his Novelty Fashion became the inimitable Lord Foppington; as Poet-Laureate he was very little worse bestowed, he was not much more ridiculous and ineffectual, than the Austins and the Whiteheads and the Pyes; for such critical portraiture of actors and actresses as are contained in the *Apology*—(a work which Fielding, in the course of his vengeance, was at

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why, with this debonair and graceless elder, to whom he was civil enough in the time of *Love in Several Masques* ; and, for the rest of his days, with that touch of pedantry which distinguished him in more than one relation of life, he never ceased from ruffianing—(a slang word ; but it exactly expresses what I mean) the unvenerable progenitor of Theophilus and Mrs. Charke. But, this distinguished Antic being excepted, I do not remember that, however passionate and enduring his interest in the Human Comedy, he was ever concerned to any serious purpose with those acts of it which are

some pains to show must of necessity be written in English, inasmuch as it could not possibly be written in anything else) —are so good, so complete, so convincing that we have to wait for Lamb and Hazlitt at their best to get anything to vie with them, and, even so, we cannot choose but feel, in comparing the antient and the moderns, that, if Hazlitt and Lamb be the better literature, 'tis the old Actor has the finer insight, and that his technical inspiration (so to speak) gets nearer, far nearer, the truth than the fine results, however closely observed or well imagined they be, of these others, *par nobile fratrium*, even though they had Munden and Kean to write about ; also, some of Cibber's work for the stage (as *The Careless Husband*) is still fairly readable. But the *Apology* apart, his chief title to fame is that neither Pope nor Fielding could away with him, and that he was not to be discomfited by either. Pope, for instance, was an artist in insults ; but he was so venomous a little beast, and his venom was so entirely out of his control, that, Cibber offending him, he entirely ruined *The Dunciad* by substituting Cibber, who was no more a dunce than himself, for 'piddling Tibbald.' For that matter, Tibbald was as little a dunce as Cibber, or as Pope ; but he was bookish, he was ever a scholar, he played the mischief with Pope's text of Shakespeare ; so that there really were reasons why he should have seemed such a dunce to Pope, and to Pope's friends, that the chief place in *The Dunciad* could be accorded to none but him. Now Theobald had questioned (and worse) Pope's scholarship ; but Colley had insisted that an unsound woman was not good diet for a confirmed invalid, a party in stays, however brilliant a writer of couplets that party in stays might be ; and this impeach-

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played by the professional comedian in the behind-the-scenes of a real theatre.

Of vastly greater moment than his quarrel with Cibber was his marriage to Miss Charlotte Cradock, of Old Sarum, which was solemnised in 1735, if not earlier, and which, it is not unfair to assume, made two young people supremely happy. Miss Charlotte was one of three fair sisters, who, though they had some money, were not of the highest and best in Salisbury, and of whom the chaste and elegant Mr. Richardson could find nothing better to say (such was his frenzy against the author of

His marriage.

ment of his *savoir faire* and his *savoir vivre* went so terribly to his head that, where he had before seen only Theobald, the quiet student, he now saw only Cibber, the old Young Man about Town, who knew so very much more about things as they are than (despite his gallant ambitions) an angry, dwarfed, corseted Poet could know, that Tibbald must come down, and Cibber must go up, and *The Dunciad* must (in effect) be disfigured and disnatured, all because its author wanted to pose as one who knew the Town, and had been proved an ignoramus by this 'harlotry player.' But the brilliant, warped, too-venturesome Arch-Libeller never (if I may so express myself) got any change out of Colley Cibber; nor, so far as I can see, did Mr. Harry Fielding, either. The truth is, the old Actor was a better Artist in insolence than either. Each of them wrote his worst about him; and he read what they had written with an eye amused, a smiling lip, and a brow of brass. Then, having read, he went out, and meditated. And Pope's repute as a Man About Town was devastated and abolished the moment he laid his hand upon it; and his description of Fielding as a 'broken wit' seems to have been as a wasp upon that gentleman's nose, and to have obliged him to forget himself whenever there was a chance of 'getting one in' on the aged, disreputable, clever, self-sufficing creature, who, absurd as he was, yet knew his *monde*, had a vast deal of tact, had parts as an actor, and some brains as a writer, and might, had he not been the kindly whoreson (there really is no other word for him) he was, have gone out of life exulting in the reflection that he had twitted Pope into making a public fool of himself, and had been for years a thorn in the cushion of Henry Fielding.

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Joseph Andrews!) than that they were bastards.¹ The vainglorious and offended Cit advances not the slightest proof of his assertion, which seems, indeed, contrived and stated for the sole purpose of belittling a hated rival. Bastard or not, however, Miss Charlotte was by common consent a beautiful creature, and a creature not less amiable than beautiful ; so that Fielding could very well afford to laugh at the little man in Salisbury Court ; and assuredly, if he ever thought of Richardson at all, which I take leave to doubt, being of a laughing humour, he did. Certain it is that he was devoted to his wife, and that when she died (as she did apparently in 1743), his passion was so violent that his friends feared for his reason. In any event hers is a name to be honoured while its memory lasts by every lover of English letters : since in her years of courtship she suggested Sophia Western, and in her years of wedlock sat for Amelia ; and in this way is primarily responsible for two of the bravest and sweetest ideals in English Fiction.

Murphy's
story.

Arthur Murphy tells a story—(but it is demonstrably untrue)—that Mrs. Fielding had a fortune of £1500 ; and that her husband spent it in three years by keeping open house at East Stour, whither he retired with his bride, and where he set up a carriage, invested a number of servants in costly yellow liveries, and generally ‘went the pace’ to such a purpose that he had presently to return to

¹ Of course, he knew nothing at all about the slanders ; or despite his gout, he might, and probably would, have done a little horse-whipping : not on the elderly printer, who was small and of a chubby habit, but on the persons of some of his more outrageous allies.

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London, and betake himself once more to the writing of farces.¹ The truth, as Mr. Dobson sees it, is that Harry Fielding may very well have retired to East Stour on the failure of *The Universal Gallant*. This happened in 1735, the accepted year of his marriage: which, as I have said, may well have been earlier. As he was back in London 'in the first months of 1736,' running 'the little French theatre in the Haymarket,' and 'the Great Mogul's Company of Comedians' (so he described them; with the further information that they had 'dropped from the Clouds'), and producing *Pasquin*, Murphy's 'three years' of 'entertainments, hounds, and horses' gets so hard a knock that, if we had not all been brought up (as it were) in the strong persuasion that Fielding was a squandering suck-pint, it would, I believe, have been held long since a common lie. Be this as it

¹ Keightley, who describes this part of Murphy's narrative as 'a mere tissue of error and inconsistency,' points out that the family colours were white and blue; while Sir Leslie Stephen very plausibly suggests that the 'yellow liveries' of Murphy's description were a reminiscence (by a thoroughly muddled mind) of that Beau Fielding (*d.* 1712) who married the Duchess of Cleveland, and also 'hired a coach, and kept two footmen clothed in yellow.' Mr. Dobson, though he does not go so far as Keightley, and opines that there was too much liquor going at 'the old farm by the Stour, with the great locust tree at the back,' which Fielding rented, so that 'the dusky Night,' did all-too often 'ride down the sky' over the 'prostrate forms of Harry Fielding's guests,' yet adduces certain irrefragable reasons in support of Keightley's case. As Mr. Booth is a character in fiction, his testimony is of a piece with what the Soldier said, in the historical case of *Bardell v. Pickwick*. If it were not, if it were real autobiography, then were Murphy only less guilty of 'infamounising' a dead man than the Thackeray who owed so much to his delusions, and did so miserably well with them.

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may, 1736 was the year of *Pasquin*; this was followed by *The Fatal Curiosity* of George Lillo, a dramatist whose work was highly esteemed by the author-manager of the Great Mogul's Company; and this in its turn gave place to *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*. With this last piece Fielding's career as a practical playwright came to an end. Herein and in *Pasquin* he hit out at Walpole and his Government with so quick a fist and so long and vigorous an arm that, to protect himself, the Prime Minister was reduced to laying the matter before the House of Commons. So far as I know, the example of neither *Pasquin* nor the *Register* was adduced in support of the Ministerial case. The offending thing was a satire called *The Golden Rump*, which was never printed, which is described as extremely personal and indecent, and which Walpole was suspected to have ordered and paid for as the best possible argument in his favour. The great Lord Chesterfield¹ spoke admirably against the Bill; but it was to no purpose. Walpole had the Commons in his pocket; the 'Licensing Act' was passed (June 1737); and despite some trifling backslidings on Fielding's part, he and the Muse of Comedy walked henceforth apart.

¹ He was the dedicatee of *Don Quixote in England*; and Mr. Dobson duly and accurately notes that some of his arguments may have been furnished him by the Author of that work.

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V

THE Stage, then, being closed to Fielding, he returned to the Law; and in the November of 1737, 'Henricus Fielding de East Stour, in Com. Dorset Ar. filius et hæres apparens Brig: Genlis: Edmundi Fielding,' was admitted of the Middle Temple. ^{Admitted of the Middle Temple.} For the next years he studied quietly and regularly, it would appear: living on his savings over *Pasquin* and the *Register*, or on what was left of the little fortune brought him by his wife. Murphy pictures him in the act of breaking away—'Rather drunk than otherwise'—from the company in *The Rose* or *The Green Dragon* to go and read law all the night long; and, if the story be true, I cannot see that, inasmuch as it presupposes a certain strength of will in the hero, it is at all to Fielding's discredit. That it is true of once or twice is possible enough; but that every night of his life he reeled upstairs and sat, with his head in towels, devising of John Doe and Richard Roe, and those other elegant and pleasing fictions which enter so largely into the illustration of the Law, I do not for one moment believe. And I take it that he who does believe it would believe anything. They are few, in fact, that start a new career at thirty; they are still fewer who, putting their old life (in Fielding's case a pretty pleasant and exciting one) behind them, are able to achieve the creation of so full and complete a round of interests as enables—nay, in the end compels—them to prosper in their new way. In Fielding there cannot but have been a great capacity for intellectual effort and enrichment. He

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was certainly no bibulous and futile wastrel that spent 'some thousands of hours' over *Tom Jones*. That book is the work of a great and serious Artist ; and I hold that the Fielding of these years of study and comparison is different in no single particular from the diligent and apprehensive writer to whom we owe our greatest novel. Lady Mary, and 'Horry' Walpole, and Arthur Murphy after them, and after him the brilliant W. M. T., knew something, and guessed more ; but they did not know enough, and they guessed backwards ; and none has ever suggested a means of reconciling their 'views' of Fielding with the strength, the majesty, the stately undiminishing serenity of Fielding's four great books. It is fair to conclude that Fielding the Templar was at least as resolute, as patient, as laborious, as Fielding the Artist. Why should he not have been? True, he was young ; but true, also, he had married a woman he loved, and she had given him other things to think about than taverns. When their girl-child died, the poor man went near to dying with her : so great was his passion, so unmingled his agony. Booth is an idler ; but, the Fates being kind, he loves nothing so much as to be alone with Amelia and her babes. Amelia is accepted as Mrs. Fielding ; why, then, should Fielding, the resolved and careful student, be set down as one incapable of Booth's example? I know not. What I do know is that there is too much of Lady Mary, and Murphy, and Thackeray about this good man's name and fame for *me* ; and that, if Mr. Dobson had not already writ his *Life*, I'd like it written again.

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I need not concern myself with his contributions *Journalism*. to *The Champion* (1739-45), a *Spectator-Tatler-Rambler* kind of thing, done in conjunction with Ralph:—

Silence, ye Wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,
And makes night hideous—Answer him, ye Owls!—

and produced three times a week, for which he wrote *Essays*—vague, apprehensive, moral, mostly rather tedious than not; nor with his *Vernon-iad* (1740), an experiment in the mock-epic; his *Defence of the Duchess of Marlborough* (1742); his *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742), ‘a little simple farce.’¹ All these things are journalism, and Fielding, though in a manner of speaking he died writing for the Press, is by this time something better, something vastly more considerable, than the best journalist that ever lived. In effect, in 1742, this scandalous rake, idler, and tippler, produced his *Joseph Andrews*; and the English Novel, started rather poorly by Nash in *Jack Wilton*,² brutified and stultified by the Head of *The English Rogue*, half-visioned, yet never seriously attempted, by Defoe, touched in a pretty futile way by Mrs. Behn—the English Novel, I say, became a living, breathing, working fact.

The book began as a parody of *Pamela* (1741); *Joseph Andrews*. it ended as the first English Novel. In *Pamela* Richardson set forth the circumstances of a virginal and very lovely Menial, whose Master, the in-

¹ Horace Walpole.

² Euphues, Sidney, Green, Lodge—what are they but romantic futilities? As little in touch with life as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, and as bad at narrative as any one you please.

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credible and indescribably wooden Mr. B., made divers desperate but entirely silly and ineffectual attempts upon her Virtue. Then, in the long run, having baffled his wiles, and beaten off his assaults, she permitted him to marry her ; so that she was amply rewarded for being a good girl, and declining to part, unless on terms, with what M. Dumas (*filis*) has called her *capital*. The story of her resistance to the impossible Mr. B. and of her final triumph over his vile passion made excellent reading for all sorts of women : fine ladies, blooming virgins, and good plain wives and mothers : then, and would make excellent reading for all sorts and conditions of maid-servants now ; though, to be sure, I pity the young woman who should risk her *capital* on Richardson's theory of the Master—('Kinder they than Missuses are,' Policeman X has said ; and certainly he is right)—as embodied in the once celebrated Mr. B. To Harry Fielding : who, for one thing, knew the worth of a wench's humour, and for another how the noble Mr. B. should have done by Pamela, and would assuredly have done by Pamela, had he not been the creation of a Vegetarian, who knew nothing of life, and wrote of women only from their own report of themselves :¹ to Harry Fielding, I say, *Pamela* appeared (as in fact it is) so much strained, unhealthy, and unnatural rubbish. That being the case, he began

¹ The worst education possible ; since it tells you nothing but what they wish to be known of themselves, at the same time that it makes you acquainted with certain subtleties which, being unconsciously revealed, appear, and probably are, so true that, seen in their light, the veracity of the whole report is made to seem unassailable.

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upon a parody: with Pamela's brother, Joseph, being wooed to his undoing by the sister of Mr. B., whose Footman he is, even as the obstinate Pamela is Mr. B.'s Maid. Now, Pamela is in love with Mr. B.: which makes her resolution all the nobler in fact and all the more romantical in design. But Joseph is in love with somebody else; so that Mr. B.'s Sister, though she plays the game a vast deal better than her idiot brother, comes off no better with Joseph¹ than Mr. B. came off with Pamela. If her Ladyship could have but a single rouse! But the Comic Spirit is afoot; and she cannot. Also, she must not; for here comes Adams (the Rev. Abraham: sure the nearest thing to Don Quixote in English!); here come Fanny, and the incomparable Slipslop, and Beau Didapper, and the excellent Towwouses, and Trulliber and Betty, the Maid of the Inn, and—how many besides? Who knows? The book being a pure joy from beginning to end, who stops to count? As a Person of Consequence in letters once said to me:—‘In *Joseph Andrews*, the Old Man’—(he talked of Fielding *ætat* 35, as ‘the Old Man!’)—‘got his hands right into the guts of Life.’ That says anything there is left to say about this gamesome and delightful Epic of the Road.² And it may stand

¹ That old affair of Mrs. Potiphar's goes on until this day.

² 'Tis a pleasure to record that it began as the success it is. It had not, one gathers, so instant and so splendid a triumph as *Pamela*; but there were Editions; and now, I take it, for one that reads the story of Mr. B. and the sublime Miss Richardson (for that, and nothing else, that is what Miss Pamela Andrews is) some sixty read the story of Joseph and Fanny. For the rest, it may be noted that Fornication, the sole Unpardonable Sin in English Fiction, is but a detail (as

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here for all the 'critical' rubbish, which I might, but will not, accumulate about it.

The Miscellanies.

1743 was the year of the *Miscellanies*: included in which, with much in prose and verse which is interesting to us only because Fielding thought it worth printing, are a *Journey to the Next World*, that odd, clever half-success in the manner of Lucian; and *Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*; that tremendous achievement in pure Irony, that masterpiece in a mode in which none save Swift has excelled this author.¹ *The Journey to the Next*

it is in life) in *Joseph Andrews*; but in much of *Pamela* it is the staple of the book. In the work done by the man who knew the world there is My Lady, there is Betty, there is the fair and desperate Slipslop, there are Didapper and Towwouse. But they are but circumstances: they fit in well enough, but they are nothing like the whole. Now, in *Pamela*, none is permitted to fornicate; yet the theme of the novel is Fornication. Mr. B. is always hovering round in a most dreadful and indecent state; and Pamela is always praying to be protected from a kind of Walking Phallus (as in a Kaulbach allegory), terribly menacing and ever ineffectual, or resisting its approaches, or writing to her parents to tell them that it has had no luck, and that she is still their Virgin child. Which is the more moral writer? Which the more buxom book?

¹ And has he, has Swift himself, done better? I cannot think so. Mr. Saintsbury says the other thing; but I take leave to disagree. Swift was a master; but in all his work there is no Jonathan, no Miss Tishey, no Mr. Snap—in fact, no *Jonathan Wild the Great*. Sir Walter did not understand the book: he thought it was a piece of realism, and, as I believe, preferred his countryman Ferdinand Count Smollett. Thackeray, though he wrote very prettily of it, seems to have grasped the writer's purpose at least as ill as Scott had done before him. The truth is, the book is an exemplar, and the best we have, of a certain mode in letters; and the mode which it exemplifies is Irony: a mode in which few Englishmen have excelled, and in whose practice even Mr. Meredith has come, at times, to hopeless grief. And for this reason it is isolated in English Letters. It is given to few to love Irony for its own sake; to still fewer to delight in the Ironical Presentation of life and character, which in this book Fielding

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World is ingenious and clever ; but it is not to be named in the same breath with *Jonathan Wild the Great*, which is in some ways Fielding's masterpiece, and which is certainly one of the masterpieces of English Literature.

Need I say anything about the rest of the *Miscellanies*? About the *Essay on Conversation*? Good as it is, it is only considerable because our Fielding wrote it. About the verses? In truth, all one can say of them is (a) that they are not bad, and (b) that some of them show the Poet in the act of making love to Miss Cradock. It is better to leave these things untouched, and to go on with the story of Fielding's life, so far as we know it. That story, so far as we know it, is very easily and briefly told. He went the Western Circuit ; the gout took hold of him ; he lost his wife, and eventually married her maid ; he did lots of journalism, some of it witty and appropriate, but none of it worthy the author of *Jonathan Wild* and *Joseph Andrews* ; in 1748 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for Westminster. It was a poor post for a man like Henry Fielding : a man versed in law, already a great writer, an adept in humanity, a past-master of

The story of
Fielding's life

essays with complete success. What did the vulgar think of it? What but that they have always thought of what they could not understand?

Some Plays he wrote sans Wit or Plot,
Adventures of Inferiors,
Which with his lives of rogues and thieves
Supply the Town's ———.

That was all they got from this unrivalled book ; and I doubt not that Lady Mary, and Mr. Walpole, and Mr. S. Johnson, and Mr. Richardson, the celebrated novelist, got still less from it than these others. The ruck counts not ; but I think that Mr. Johnson should have known better.

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the ways and uses of Society. But it seems to have contented him ; and he continued in it till he died. Also, he was evidently a most capable, humane, intelligent, and vigorous magistrate ; or the Bow Street records printed in *The Covent Garden Journal* go for naught. Then, again, there is no doubt that he got his death in the pursuit of certain gangs of robbers, which gangs he, being then quite horribly ill, did utterly confound and annihilate. In the meanwhile, he published *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751¹) ; he endured the brutalities of Smollett, sick with envy and hate and rancour ; he edited *The Covent Garden Journal*. Then the time came for him. His health was irreparably broken ; he had dropsy, and he had gout ; the Magnificent Young Man of not so many years ago was plainly dying. That he knew as much is certain : that he had lived his life, and here was the end. But he did not say so ; and that thief-catching affair, however splendid a piece of good magistracy and good citizenship, may fairly be said to have but precipitated an inevitable event. Our sole satisfaction in it now is that he also was satisfied : he had answered to the call of Authority ; had done his duty and retired. When he sailed for Lisbon, his work was over ; and he knew it. Still, he had enough of life and energy left to enact and write the circumstances of his pilgrimage ; and, as I think, 'tis in this book, this *Voyage to Lisbon*, that we find the true Fielding. Modest, patient, suffering, ever dignified, perfectly whole-hearted, perfectly cheerful, perfectly resigned : in fact, the great

*The Voyage
to Lisbon.*

¹ Published in the December of that year ; but dated 1752.

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Englishman whose ghost, if he have a ghost, has pretty certainly put Thackeray's on its knees long since, very much as in his real body he put his Captain on his marrow-bones in the cabin of that *Queen of Portugal* in which he sailed for Lisbon. Lisbon and Death. In Lisbon among *Os Cyrestes*, the secular trees in the English graveyard hard by, he lies until this day.

There's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,
And the Nightingale sings in them all the day long.

So he does over the grave of Harry Fielding. Meanwhile 'Luget Britannia Gremio Non Dari Fovere Natum.' There is no more Fielding now. But we have not been idle. Far from it. And there is now an infinite deal of Messrs. Howells and James.

VII

OF all the definitions that ever were defined Taine's definition of Fielding as 'a good buffalo' strikes me as one of the most absurd. But Taine, man of genius as he was born, and *savant* as he made himself, was at all times the prey of any theory that happened to commend itself to his imaginative yet very logical mind ; and either this, his theory of Harry Fielding,¹ was one of the unluckiest he ever

¹ It was as Harry, I think, that he was known to the contemporary crowd : at all events to such of it as knew and loved him. I recall an odd instance. In certain records of the Old Bailey Sessions, purchased for professional uses by the late R. L. S., and devoutly perused by me, we came on a case of blackmailing, the details of which are happily

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developed, or you can pay no man a higher compliment than to call him a Good Buffalo. For consider what, in Fielding's case, is comprehended in the term. Here is a man brave, generous, kind to the *n*th degree; a man with a great hatred of meanness and hypocrisy, and a strong regard for all forms of *virtus*, whether natural and impulsive or an effect of culture and reflection; an impassioned lover, a devout husband, a most cordial and careful father; so staunch a friend that his books are so many proofs of his capacity for friendship; of so sound a heart, of so vigorous a temperament, of so clear-eyed and serene a spirit, that years and calamities and disease do not exist for him, and he takes his leave of the World in one of the most valiant and most genial little books that ever was penned; distinguished among talkers by a delightful gaiety, a fine and gracious understanding, an inalienable dignity; withal of an intelligence at once so vigilant and so penetrating, at once so observant and so laborious and exacting, that, without hurry as without noise, patient ever and ever diligent, a master of life, a master of character, a master of style, he achieved for us the four great books we have, and, in achieving them, did so nobly by his nation and his mother tongue that he that would praise our splendid, all-comprehending speech aright has said the best he can of it when he says that it is the speech of Shakespeare and Field-

unfit for print. One of the Hunters—John, I *think*—was a chief witness for the defence; and in the course of his evidence he noted that he had seen such a case before; at Bow St., 'in Harry Fielding's time.' I am sure of the quotation, though I have forgot the speaker's Christian name.

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ing. If to be a Good Buffalo be all that—(and in Harry Fielding's case it is all that, and more)—why, then, I can't help wishing that the breed were more prolific; and even that M. Henri Taine had himself belonged to it.

I shall say nothing about the four great books, for the very simple reason that everything there is to say about them has been said. Like Dickens's work, and Scott's, but, as is inevitable and natural, to a still greater extent, as yet they are as essential a component in the mighty fabric of our Literature as the plays and poems of Shakespeare, or the poetry of Spenser and Milton, and Gibbon and John Bunyan, and Defoe's half-failures, and Mr. Boswell's biography. And when I say that to consider them: in all their stately shapeliness of plan, their admirable completeness of structure, their reasoned prodigality of detail and adornment: is for me about the same, neither more nor less, than considering St. Paul's, which I esteem the piece of architecture the nearest to perfection these eyes of mine have seen, it will be apprehended, I hope, that I keep not silence out of irreverence. But everybody worth mentioning—(as Lady Mary, Gibbon, Gray, Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Sir Leslie Stephen, Mr. Lang, Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Saintsbury,¹) has spoken: and

The Four
Great Books.

¹ Whose notes on Fielding are edifying and sagacious in no mean degree: especially the passages in which he deals with Mr. Jones's relations to Lady Bellaston, and seeks to explain Dr. Johnson's dislike of Fielding. Thackeray's view was distorted and obscured by the fact that (a) he was so terrible a Sentimentalist that he thought Amelia Sedley and Laura Bell ideals for which to live and die; (b) that he considered Fielding the Man a most improper Person; and (c) that he

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why should I essay to say something new and convincing after these? 'Tis enough that, as I think, Harry Fielding was a great and good man ; who also, by premeditation and design, laboriously created an Art, and created it in such terms, and to such a purpose, that none has practised it since his time but must have worked and written differently if this immortal Master had not written and worked before him.

envied Fielding the Artist his chances, would have liked to make a real Man, as Fielding had done, and could do nothing better than the ingenuous Pendennis. Scott is, as they say, 'all right as far as he goes'; but he goes not very far, and, as I have said, he frankly prefers Smollett before Fielding, even to the extent of making the Englishman pick a quarrel with the Scot, and so completely falsifying history; the fact being, of course, that Smollett: who, take him all round, was a worse case of megalomania than Richardson himself: began by grossly insulting Fielding and his friend Lyttelton in the First edition of *Peregrine Pickle*, and went on to produce the really infamous pamphlet in which (1752) he professed to give an account of the strange and dreadful madness of one Habakkuk Hilding, 'trading justice and chapman.' Another critic, whose identity I will not discover, goes so far, in the vain endeavour to be original (an endeavour which hath made him eminently individual in the matter of facts and dates), as to ask if *Amelia* be not 'a little dull'? I will close this note by owning that Thackeray, if he, whether wilfully or stupidly, misunderstood and mis-stated the Man, was in absolute sympathy with the Writer, and that his eulogy of Fielding (in *The English Humourists*) is the most eloquent and the best there is.

SMOLLETT

THE life of Smollett has been written by several hands in several styles: in the classic vein by his friend and imitator Dr. Moore, whose *Zeluco*, now almost unreadable, was long renowned as moving and most dangerous work; by Walter Scott, who, taking his author, as he took most things,

His
biographers

Like a gentleman at ease,
With moral breadth of temperament,

produced a note on him that, despite a patriotism which makes the writer often take bladders for lanterns, none who wishes to esteem his Smollett can afford to leave unread; by Mr. David Hannay, whose little book is of peculiar value and interest to those who would know what was the Navy in which Smollett observed the originals of his most famous creations. There are others,¹ notably Robert Chambers and an anonymous *Quarterly Reviewer*. But I think that any one who reads

¹ I can imagine no more useful summary of Smollett's adventures and capacities than that contributed by Mr. T. Seccombe in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: this, though I think that Mr. Seccombe is, like Scott, to his hero's faults a little blind, and to his hero's virtues rather kinder than he ought to be.

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these three, and supplements his reading with Smollett *passim*, need read no more to be able to figure the man as he was. I purpose, then, to give but the briefest outline of the career, and to keep as close to the man—the humorous, arrogant, red-headed, stiff-necked, thin-skinned, scurrilous, brilliant, Scots hack of genius—as his novels will let me.

I

His boyhood. IT is said that *Roderick Random* is largely an autobiography. If this be so—and it is scarce credible—then must Smollett have had a most bitter boyhood: a boyhood, truly, which would go far to account for the high-handed, hard-hitting, indiscriminating insolence and aggressiveness of his later years. By his own showing, he was hated by his grandfather, and by his cousins bullied into ferocity; all because his father had married out of his station, and by so doing had secured the lasting displeasure of his own progenitor, and the immitigable hate and scorn of his time-serving kinsfolk. There is very little of all this in what is actually known of Smollett's life. He came of a house which, 'though in nowise ancient,' was in every sense respectable;¹ and his grandfather, Sir James of Bonhill—some-time a judge in the Commissary Court, often returned to the old Scots Parliament, a commissioner for the effecting of the Union between the Kingdoms—was by way of being a distinguished man.

His house.

¹ He was a gentleman of coat-armour, and in France would have been counted noble.—HANNAY, *Smollett* (1887), p. 1.

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Sir James had four sons ; and Smollett (Tobias George) was the youngest born of Archibald, the youngest of these. Now, it is certainly true that Archibald did not marry to please his father ; but it is also written that Sir James, however sore his displeasure, and however hard-fisted and illiberal he may have been in general, behaved, in the sequel, quite handsomely, and established Archibald in a farm with an income of £300 a year. Archibald dying soon after the birth of Tobias George (1721), Sir James provided more or less generously for his widow and children ; so that in the long run James, the eldest son, got a commission, and rose to the command of a company, while Jean, the girl, was well and prosperously married, and Tobias George was apprenticed to a certain Gordon, who is said to figure as the Potion of his first novel, and who was, historically, a Glasgow surgeon and apothecary. Apprenticed to a surgeon. Now, it is written that Tobias George, for all his stomach for filth—(a stomach, by the way, which may well have been developed in him by the circumstances of common life in the unabashed and unclean Scotland which he knew)—had a soul above clysters, and longed for nothing less than a pair of colours ; and it is certain that Sir James, not only made an apothecary of him but also, ignored the widow and orphans of Archibald Smollett in his will ; so it is conceivable that Tobias George, who was ever addicted to self-righteousness and never averse from misrepresentation, should, in a fit of fury, have grossly libelled his intimates and very scandalously misstated his environment. But in the preface to his novel he is careful to note that he made his hero

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His
resemblance
to Roderick
Random.

a Scot because, for one thing, a Scot might be poor and yet well educated, which an Englishman could not be ; for another, because he could 'represent simplicity of manners in a remote part of the kingdom with more propriety than in any place near the capital' ; and, for another, because the Scot was of a wandering habit, and might therefore figure naturally as the hero of a novel of adventure. Moreover, writing years afterwards (1763), he is moved to declare that the resemblance between himself and Roderick Random is merely general.¹ Inasmuch, then, as he takes pains to figure his associates in the vilest terms, and to present his circumstances as immitigably squalid ; inasmuch, too, as in *Humphry Clinker* he wipes up some of the dirt which he has scattered in *Roderick Random* ;² it is fair to infer that the interest of his first novel is autobiographical only because the writer speaks in the first person, and speaks with bitterness and point enough to make his readers believe that his particularity is not less authentic than the broader lines

¹ 'The only similitude between the circumstances of my own fortune, and those I have attributed to Roderick Random, consists in my being born of a respectable family in Scotland, in my being bred a surgeon, and having served as a surgeon's mate on board a man-of-war during the expedition of Carthage. The low situations in which I have exhibited Roderick I never experienced in my own person.'—SMOLLETT, 'To——, New Jersey, North America.' London, May 1763.

² 'I was introduced,' Mr. Matthew Bramble says, 'to Mr. Gordon, patriot of a truly noble spirit, who is father of the linen manufacturer in that place, and was the great promoter of the city workhouse, public infirmary, and other works of public utility. Had he lived in ancient Rome he would have been honoured with a statue at the public expense' (*Humphry Clinker*. 'To Dr. Lewis. Cameron, August 28'). No doubt ; but he lived in Eighteenth Century Glasgow, and is remembered, if at all, as Smollett's Mr. Potion.

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on which he works are unassailable. And this, for Smollett's sake, I am very willing to believe.¹

Whether Gordon, Smollett's master, sat or not for Potion, it is certain that he thought kindly and well of his 'ain bubbly-nosed callant wi' the stane in his pouch';² and whether Smollett was or was not bullied into savagery by his cousins, it is certain that, according to Mr. Colquhoun of Camstradden, his conversation in these his 'prentice days consisted in a 'continued string of epigrammatic sarcasm,' for which 'no talents could compensate.' It is possible that, in the intervals of dispensing medicines for Potion, he attended lectures at Glasgow University; but of this there is no trace in that 'angry travesty'³ of his earlier years, which he introduced into *Roderick Random*, and on which the autobio-

¹ All the same, the great and deserved success of *Roderick Random* was partially a *succès de scandale*. Potion, Crab, and Squire Gawkey were, Scott says, at once identified; so was Roderick's grandfather; divers persons contended for the honour of originating Strap—much as there were several claimants to the honour of sitting out with Burns 'Amang the rigs o' barley'; Oakum and Whiffle, Marmozet and Sheerwit and Narcissa—to the public of 1748 all these were plain as the nose on your face. As Roderick's uncle, honest Bowling should, one thinks, have come in for his share of recognition. But the presence on Leven side of this arrant and indubitable Englishman would have been ruinous to the theory. So he was ignored. For the rest, the lack of what is called 'atmosphere,' the absence of local colour, whether deliberate or not, are such that the incidents and characters of Smollett's earlier chapters would fit the Spain of *Gil Blas* almost as well as the West of Scotland.

² *Anglicè*, his 'own snotty-nosed youngster with the stone in his pocket': a description not less discrediting to Tobias George's practice of cleanliness—(Roderick, by the way, is eagerly dandified and poetical)—than it is honourable to his capacity for readiness and resource in the matter of practical ruffianism.

³ HANNAY, *Smollett*, p. 67.

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The road to
London.

graphical theory is based. If, however, the theory suffer at this point—it is plain that Smollett was well grounded and well read—its claim to consideration is in some sort re-integrated by the fact that, like Random, Smollett wrote a tragedy in his 'teens, and that, like Random, he presently took the road to London. That he went by waggon is probable ;¹ and that on the way he encountered with the tremendous Rifle, the engaging Miss Ramper, the sharpening, fiddling curate, the distinguished Billy Weazle and his lady, and the Horatian ale-draper—this also is probable ; for he has described all these experiences with a gust, an airy and brilliant exactness, an abounding sense of the ridiculous, which make for conviction in his readers even now, as they have made for conviction in them ever since he wrote. As convincing, as vivid, as *vécues*, every whit are Roderick-Smollett's experiences of London citizens and London streets, his account of which is solemnly adduced, I believe, as one of the reasons why his countrymen have never taken him to their hearts for the rare *amuseur* that he was. It is (I am told) an article of faith in Scotland that the Scot can never be other than wilfully absurd. This is just as true, of course, as the counter-proposition ; that, whether wilfully or not, he can never be anything else. But 'tis an article

¹ 'Twas a means of transport favoured by his countrymen. Thus, CHURCHILL, *The Prophecy of Famine* (1762), concerning Scotland :—

To that rare soil, where virtues clust'ring grow,
What mighty blessings doth not England owe ?
What *waggon-loads* of courage, wealth, and sense,
Doth each revolving day import from hence ?

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of faith ; and it would seem that Smollett was predestined to figure as a sort of sacrifice to Burns. The sense of *A Man's a Man* and *Tam O' Shanter* and the glorious Twenty-Fifth of January, all latent and impending, was contained in his birthright ; and, in ignoring it, and, in parading himself as a Scot bewildered and befooled, he was unequal to his opportunity, and, besides, was false to his tradition. True, that tradition as yet was unsuspected ; but it was none the less real and imperious ; especially to the sectaries born a hundred years after Strap and Roderick had been hailed for the gawks they were, and their creator had shown himself worthy his inspiration and his chance. A brilliant and diverting piece of farce he made of it ; and yet, 'tis said, his countrymen have ever held it as the unpardonable thing. The explanation is, they are a people which breeds great humorists ; but they are not a humorous people.

II

It does not appear that Smollett purposed to practise his art in London ; or, if he did so purpose, that he meant his practice to be anything but a means to a higher end, which end was literature. The fact is, he had a tragedy in his pocket ; a Scots-historical tragedy ; a tragedy done after the best models, and assured—partly for that reason, but chiefly because it was the work of Tobias George Smollett—of immediate and conspicuous success. It is a tedious performance ; faint in outline, tame in workmanship, utterly insipid in effect, and written

*The
Regicide.*

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in that inexpressive, colourless, correct iambic which the Eighteenth Century was pleased to consider an improvement upon the medium of Shakespeare. But, such as it is, Smollett loved it dearly, and his failure to convince the world of its intrinsic excellence was a bitter and exasperating memory during many years.¹ That he expected it to bring him gold and glory is most certain ; his disappointment else had been far less keen, his ill-humour nothing like so rancorous and so lasting. An introduction to Lord Lyttelton,² the friend of Thomson and Fielding, the dedicatee of *Tom Jones* brought the young tragic into communication with Garrick, and resulted, in the sequel, in the gibbeting of both

¹ It is called *The Regicide*, and deals in a lofty, high-sniffing, perfunctory way with the murder of James I. So far as I can see, the most that can be said for it is, that it is carefully written. For particulars in its dispraise see HANNAY (*Smollett*, pp. 23-27) and CHURCHILL, *The Apology* (1761):—

Who ever read *The Regicide* but swore
The author wrote as man ne'er wrote before ?
Others for plots and underplots may call,
Here's the right method—have no plot at all.
Who can so often in his cause engage
The tiny pathos of the Grecian stage,
Whilst horrors rise, and tears spontaneous flow
At tragic *Hah !* and no less tragic *Oh !*
To praise his nervous weakness all agree ;
And as for sweetness who so sweet as he !
Too big for utterance when sorrows swell,
The too big sorrows flowing tears must tell,
But when those flowing tears shall cease to flow
Why—then, then the voice must speak again, you know.

For the rest, the author's partiality was notorious ; and, so far as I know, 'twas quizzed by everybody who took up arms against him.

² Probably, Mr. Hannay thinks, through Malloch, or Mallet, his lordship's secretary, the 'beggarly Scotchman' of Johnson's famous description.

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Garrick and Lyttelton, the one as Mr. Marmozet, Garrick and the other as Sheerwit, in *Roderick Random*; Lyttelton. together with the introduction of Lyttelton as Gosling Scrag into the First Edition of *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), and the *Faithful Narrative, etc.* (1752), and the ill-bred and contemptible *Burlesque Ode*, in which was parodied Lyttelton's *Monody* on the death of his wife. To Smollett, indeed, *The Regicide* was certainly the dearest of his works. He never forgot nor forgave the circumstances of its reception; and when he published the poor thing (1749), after the success of *Roderick Random*, it was with a preface that remains a monument of exasperated vanity and petulant, undignified resentment.¹

This was later. For the present, the tragedy a proved failure, the glories of Drury Lane—'the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses'—remote as the light on Beulah's hills, Smollett had perforce to do the work he could or starve. He might, of course, have hired himself out to another

¹ Garrick was forgiven in the long run; but not until money had passed, and the Smollett of *The Regicide* had blossomed into the Smollett of *The Reprisal*, which Garrick, not only produced but, helped with a gift of twenty guineas towards the author's expenses, besides 'playing it on,' in one of his best parts. Hence the fair—not to say fulsome—speeches in the *History* (1757-65), in which there are kindnesses for Lyttelton also, and, with Lyttelton, Henry Fielding. Him Smollett hated and depreciated on several grounds: as his superior in art, as a successful writer for the stage, as Lyttelton's friend and Garrick's, as a person who dared to jibe in print at *Peregrine Pickle*. For the rest, the actor Smollett loved was—not Garrick but—Quin: between himself and whom there is place for a not uninteresting parallel. Garrick, it should be noted, is the hero of *The Rosciad*, the reception of which by somebody in Smollett's name and Smollett's pay, made Churchill, as we shall see, his sturdiest enemy.

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Smollett, a
surgeon's
mate.

Potion, and for him spread cataplasms and compounded clysters until he felt himself strong enough to spread and compound on his own account. Happily for letters, happily for posterity, happily (so Mr. Hannay tells us) for his country, he found such practice impossible, and got a berth as surgeon's mate on one of the ships which in 1740 sailed, under Vernon, on the expedition to Cartagena.¹ The navy was at this time at its worst. Its spirit was rebellious and self-seeking, its manners were ruffianly, its tradition had fallen into contempt. It was lacking neither in good officers nor in good seamen; it was capable of notable work—as, for instance, Anson's voyage—of exemplary patience, bold initiative, enduring and desperate hardihood; most of the qualities which, some sixty years hence, were to make it the saviour of the realm. But in the main, it was brutalised almost beyond report, thought, or belief; it was horribly ill-found; it was largely the creation of the press-gang, and so was riddled through and through with 'smugglers, pirates, poachers, burglars, highwaymen, and insolvent debtors';² it was officered by a set of men

¹ Chambers conjectures that he was helped into the place by Sir Andrew Mitchell, secretary to the Marquess of Tweeddale, sometime Minister for Scotland (1742-5), and Minister at the Court of Frederick the Great during the Seven Years War.

² HANNAY, *Smollett* (1887), p. 33. At this point, being a mere layman, I do but summarise or transcribe from Mr. Hannay's book, which—to those who would know anything of Smollett's originals—of his warrant, that is, for Crampley and Trunnion, for Morgan and Bowling and Mackshane—is merely indispensable. See, further, his article in *Blackwood* for August 1888, called 'Smollett And The Old Sea-Dogs,' wherein are discussed the possibilities of Trunnion and Oakum. Writing in 1887, Mr. Hannay thought that no post-captain could ever have been altogether so bad a brute as Oakum;

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who were part seamen, part politicians, and part ruffians ; it detested the soldier, and would a thousand times rather wrangle with him than render him assistance, or accept assistance at his hands. This was the navy as Smollett knew it—this the navy as he saw it at work at Cartagena ; and 'tis small wonder if his story of it, whether in *Roderick Random*, which is a piece of fiction, or in his *Account of the Expedition against Cartagena*, which is a piece of history, must, even at this day, be read with tears of wrath and shame. Thanks to Smollett, Mr. Hannay thinks, the expedition 'became a warning, and so helped to prevent the recurrence of anything quite so disgraceful in after times.' And the reason is plain :—'Admirals and generals' went on quarrelling and bungling ; but 'at least they took pains to avoid being as [Admiral] Vernon and [General] Wentworth.' In the end, we had to shoot Byng—*pour décourager des autres* ; to prevent our admirals and generals, that is, from entertaining the theory that war is a private adventure at the public expense, and that he comes best out of it who brings with him the head of an adventurer in the rival service. If Smollett helped to do that, he did an admirable work, and has his share, not only in the formation of the firing-party which made an end of Byng but also, in the creation of that navy whose 'crowning mercies' are Copenhagen, the Nile, Trafalgar. Go we as far as this or not, one thing is certain : that he knew the navy of his time as the

The Navy as
he knew it.

but a report of the proceedings in the case of the Hon. Edward Hervey, of the *Superb*, court-martialled at Spithead, in the August of 1742, has since (he tells me) constrained him to change his opinion.

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navy has been known to no man writing since his time, excepting only Dibdin and Marryat. Practically, in fact, he revealed the British seaman as material for letters—divined his character, sketched his outlines, formulated his lingo, discovered his possibilities, to such a purpose, that there is never an artist who has treated that gallant and engaging creature since but owes him something ;¹ so that, in this if in no other matter, he may fairly be said to have left a brilliant and enduring mark on the literature of England.

His
marriage.

In the meantime Smollett went with Vernon and the fleet from Cartagena to Jamaica, and in Jamaica, quitting the service, he found a wife, and stayed. The lady's name was Anne Lascelles, and she is said to have been the original of Narcissa, as she is no doubt the heroine of her husband's *Ode to Blue-Eyed Ann*:—

When the rough North forgets to howl,
And Ocean's billows cease to roll ;
When Lybia's sands are bound in frost,
And cold to Nova Zembla's lost !
When heav'nly bodies cease to move,
My blue-ey'd Ann I'll cease to love.²

¹ I do not forget that, after Chaucer's Shipman, the earliest seaman in English letters is Congreve's Ben, in *Love for Love* (1695) : still less that Oakum and Whiffle—the germ, too, of Trunnion, the tarpaulin Commodore—are contained in the Commodore Flip and the Captain Mizen of Charles Shadwell's play, *The Fair Quaker of Deal* (1710). But I am told that Ben, howbeit he is acutely observed, is a landsman's sailor after all ; and I can testify to the fact that, while Flip and Mizen and the rest of Shadwell's lot are credible so far as they go, they are wholly lacking in that gay, convincing, sympathetic *maestria* which is the mark of Smollett's decent seamen, from Lieutenant Bowling down to Captain Crowe.

² 'Twas thus they wooed the melting Muse c. 1742. The

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The lady was ('tis plain) a beauty, and in her way was something of a fortune ;¹ and, though nothing is known, it may be conjectured with Mr. Hannay—(Mr. Seccombe is of another way of thinking)—that Smollett married in Jamaica, and came to London on 'the comfortable though moderate estate' which, thanks to Miss Lascelles, he 'enjoyed.' He seems to have tried to establish himself as a physician ; and he is heard of as a householder in Westminster and in Mayfair. But it avails him nothing. He is a man of letters at heart ; that wonderful *Regicide* is still unpublished and unplayed ; he still goes up and down in its behalf. He writes an opera, and Handel is to furnish the music ; but there is a row, and Handel takes his music elsewhere, and Smollett is left alone with his manager and his book (*Alceste*) ; and in *Reproof: A Satire*,²

A quarrel
with Rich.

sentiment of Smollett's *Ode* is precisely that of *O, My Luve's Like a Red, Red Rose*, the spawn of which admirable ditty was floating even then about in time, till it could find a poet on whom to cling and coalesce. Burns was a lad of eleven when Smollett died, and Smollett's friend, Zeluco Moore, was one of his admiring correspondents. Yet there seems a hundred years between the two.

¹ 'Through whom,' writes Smollett to his American correspondent, 'I enjoy (1767) a comfortable, though moderate, estate.' Scott says that the fortune turned out to be a lawsuit, and it is certain that Smollett often wanted money, and none from Jamaica was forthcoming. But it is also certain that he habitually lived beyond his income, and that, with nothing but what Miss Lascelles brought him, he contrived to live in London with respect and dignity between 1744, when he left Jamaica, and 1748, when he published *Roderick Random* ; so that, in the beginning at least, one may infer that his case was no worse than that of most colonial owners, who spent more than they ought, and found their rents less easy to come by than they wished.

² *Reproof* is his second essay in the *genre*. The first, *Advice* (1746), is chiefly remarkable for the freedom and gaiety with which, in the verse of the text as in the prose of the

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he tells that manager what he thinks of him (1747):—

Let RICH, with dulness and devotion drunk,
Enjoy the peal so barbarous and loud,
While his brain spues new monsters to the crowd.

It was all to no purpose. Drunk or sober, Rich remained unmoved; and, what was worse, so did the ‘dear, d——nd, distracting Town.’ Smollett, though, had but begun. His failures, however bitterly he resented them, were, after all, of scant account; as yet he had said nothing which could not have been at least as aptly said by somebody else; it was still for him to show whether he was man of genius or bookseller’s hack. In the sequel he turned out a kind of linsey-woolsey, part one thing and part t’other. But he began by approving himself a man of genius; for in the January of 1748, being in his twenty-seventh year, he published *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, and came into all men’s view as the author of a new departure in the English Novel.

*Roderick
Random.*

III

Smollett and FIELDING derived himself from Cervantes; Smollett’s acknowledged exemplar was Le Sage. Writing angrily and truculently where Le Sage had written with an urbane and intelligent smile;

notes, the writer, who was not long married, dilates upon the prevalence of unnatural crime. For the rest, both pieces are written in the good old Popeian couplet, are couched in the good old Popeian vein, and might (their insolence apart) have been written by any discontented poetaster of the time.

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writing, too, with an utter contempt for the good taste, the good breeding, the reticence, the ironical and far-reaching amenity, which, as being essentials in the great tradition of French literature, were so to say inherent in Le Sage ; he set forth, so he avers, 'to represent modest merit'—in the person of Roderick Random!—'struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed, from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind.' Here, in other words, was the *novela picaresca* adapted to English uses and turned to English ends ; and Le Sage himself, through whom its achievement was made possible, must certainly, could he have read, have been constrained to smile approval on the event.

The book was hard, coarse, cruel—a rough-and-tumble hurly-burly of impudent, squalid, and unedifying adventure ; but it was novel, it was brilliant, it had 'touches of tenderness, it teemed with vividly seen and instantly presented character, it abounded in life and spirit and fun. It achieved a very great success ;¹ and Smollett, taking the ball at the hop, promptly published . . . *The Regicide* (1749). It is inconceivable, I know ; but it is so, and that so it is is the most surprising thing in literary history. Most men, I take it, who have written a tragedy at eighteen, are very glad to ignore the beast's existence. If they think of it at all, it is with terror ; lest an enemy get hold of it, and make

*The
Regicide
published.*

¹ Lyttelton was so intimidated by the ferocity with which Smollett bore his triumph that "fear of Smollett" is said to have been the primary cause of the protracted delay in the appearance of his *Henry II.*—SECCOMBE (*D. N. B.*).

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life a burden and a shame to them by enlarging on its beauties to the world. Or screeds of it come back to them in the vigils of the night, and they hate and despise themselves for that they could ever have been thus imbecile, thus forsaken and forlorn of God. Not so this Scotchman! A violent and pitiless *farceur*, and—if you object not to his familiarity with the *chaise percée* and its concomitants—an excellent artist in farce, he cherishes his beggarly bantling all the more dearly for its innate and irremediable beggarliness. The explanation is, of course, that, in so far as the works of Tobias George Smollett, Esquire, M.D., are concerned, his state of mind is that which has been, and still is, ingeniously described as ‘a fool’s paradise.’ I do not doubt that he was ever ready to declaim his iambs to any honest parasite who would take a sneaker of punch with him; and I am convinced, though I have no proof of my conviction, that in the long hours between sleep and sleep he must often have got the most he could out of his enforced leisure by—not blushing for his offence, nor calling on the bedclothes to hide him from the wrath of Apollo, but—rolling certain choice morsels on his tongue:—

Rage on, fierce youth, more savage than the storm
That howls on Thule’s shore!—th’ unthrifty maid,
Too credulously fond! who gave away
The heart so lavishly, deserves to wed
The woes that from her indiscretion flow!
Yet were my folly shared with thee, etc. :—

and thinking to himself, while poor Narcissa—(of whom I cannot conceive as intellectual)—slept

SMOLLETT

peacefully at his back, that *here* is tragedy. Pity and terror, the Aristotelian prescription in full blast, in fact—here they are; and if they be not here, then where?—(‘Yes, by heaven! I ask you where?’)—*where* are you to look for them? So Hogarth, when somebody, whom he has just dismissed as a jackass for comparing Handel and a long-forgotten composer of music, is cited as declaring that he (Hogarth) could paint as good a portrait as Van Dyck:—‘And so I can, by God! Give me my time, and let me choose my subject.’ There is no comparison, of course; for *The Regicide* is rubbish, however you take it, and a good Hogarth is good art, whether it be comparable to a good Van Dyck or not. But Smollett could have been no fiercer, had *The Regicide* been as good tragedy as the *Captain Coram* (say) is good portraiture. He was the vainest of mankind, in truth; and—for many years at least—whatever he did was made eminent and admirable to him by the mere circumstance that he had done it.

This is but another way of saying that he lacked all sense of proportion: so that he seriously esteemed himself—not merely a great neglected tragic, but also—the only English Novelist. Henry Fielding, for instance, may be said to have done him wrong intolerable by publishing *Joseph Andrews* (1742), and *Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743), some years before the appearance of *Roderick Random* (1748); to have worsened the effect of these nefarious proceedings by producing *Tom Jones* in 1749—the year of *The Regicide*; and to have added insult to injury (so to speak) by putting out *Amelia* in 1751

Smollett's
vanity.

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—the very year in which, according to Smollett, there should be no public for any book but *Peregrine Pickle*. About the same time, too, he, or a friend of his—Gosling Scrag, or some scandalous ruffian in that ridiculous impostor's pay!—writing over the signature of Sir Alexander Drawcansir, distinctly cheapened *Pickle* and *Random* both, in just such an obscene sheet as you might expect from a trading justice who had married his cook, and tried to make ends meet by the composition of what he—(poor beast!)—called novels. To the Unique Novelist, the sole and only Author of *The Regicide*—that immortal play!—of *Reproof and Advice*—those extraordinary essays in satire!—of *Roderick Random*—that singular exemplar of all that is essential in fiction!—of *Gil Blas*,¹ that achievement in translation!—*Amelia*—('Another so-called masterpiece, by God!')—was more than this particular sample of flesh-and-blood could bear. True, he had gone out of his way to speak his mind about what he thought of Lyttelton—(still harping on *The Regicide*, you see!)—and of Lyttelton's friend,—the friend, too, of that triple scoundrel and ignoramus, Garrick!—the author of *Joseph Andrews*, and *Jonathan Wild*, and *Tom Jones*, in the First Edition of *Pickle*.² But he had thought

¹ Published in 1749—the year after *Roderick Random*: the year, in fact, of *The Regicide*. Smollett confessed to the translation of *Gil Blas*; so that, whether he made or merely revised and corrected, it is certain—(for *Gil Blas* is a bulky as well as a notable book)—that his apprenticeship to hack-work was fairly well accomplished before he took the town with *Random*.

² 'I advise Mr. Spondy to give him' (Gosling Scrag = Lyttelton) 'the refusal of this same pastoral, and who knows

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better of it, and had magnanimously purged his Second Edition of offence. And then, this rag, this *Covent Garden Journal*, presuming on his loftiness of soul, was actually ill-advised enough to laugh at the new masterpiece! Ingratitude so base, so insolent, so inhuman, was not to go unchastised. Nor did it. Smollett, whether or not he had repented him of his deviation into decency, rose to the occasion with as it were a howl of joy, and in his *Faithful Narrative of the Base and Inhuman Arts that Were Lately Practised on the Brain of Habakkuk Hilding, Justice and Chapman*¹ (1752),

His attack
upon
Fielding.

but he may have the good fortune of being listed in the number of his' (Gosling Scrag's) 'benefactors, in which case he may, in process of time, be provided for in the Customs or Church; and when he is inclined to marry his own cook-maid, his gracious patron may condescend to give the bride away, and may finally settle him in his old age as a trading Westminster Justice.' This pleasing passage was 'expunged' from the Second Edition of *Pickle* (1751); and perhaps the broken-down, over-worked, dropsical poor devil, who created the English Novel, ought to have truckled to the insult, owned the brilliant North British imitator of Le Sage for his master, and let things go as Smollett thought they ought. Walter Scott, writing as a good patriot, is disposed to halve the blame with Fielding. But the author of this, the initial insult, was Smollett.

¹ The piece is little known, and for the benefit of the curious it is reprinted with an explanatory note, among my author's miscellanies in the Twelfth Volume of Messrs. Constable's Edition. It is, as will be seen, of scandalous indecency, and marks off Smollett the literary controversialist to much the same purpose as Smollett the disappointed politician is marked off in the *Adventures of an Atom*. It was, no doubt, a galling reflection to the writer that Fielding, as well as being a dangerous rival in art, was better born and better bred and better educated than himself: that he had of right the entry to a *monde* which Smollett could approach but as an inspector of urinals and an authority upon evacuations. So he is careful to note, among other amenities, that Fielding had certainly been a bulker, and, among other shifts, had blown a trumpet at Bartholomew Fair, and had for some time served as bully in a brothel. Of course this is only pretty Fanny's way. But if pretty Fanny

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retorted on his illustrious rival in a strain of shameless and savage ridicule which is hard to forgive and wholly impossible to forget. Already broken in constitution, Fielding had by this time completed that achievement in art which no Englishman considers without a sense of gratitude and pride, and was very soon (1754) to sink under his fatigues, and to expire in exile at Lisbon. Smollett had as little respect for his elder in years, and labours, and trials, as he had reverence or admiration for his master in letters. It pleased him to be insolent, scurrilous, indecent ; and he had his way.

*Peregrine
Pickle.*

Meanwhile, *Peregrine Pickle* had achieved a very brilliant success: partly on its merits and partly because the author had inserted in it the notorious *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*. That the interpolation had nothing whatever to do with the rest of the book, seems to have mattered nothing to the assailant of Henry Fielding. It was 'good copy,' anyhow ; for, in the first place, the lady most concerned in it paid him handsomely for its production ; and, in the second, it was so scandalous in detail, and, to a certain class of mind, so taking in effect, that it could not but serve as an admirable 'send-off' to Pickle and Pipes and Trunnion in the unimaginable event of these being found unpleasant to the general. He threw in, as I have shown, some personalities on his own account—together

have this way, it has to be admitted that the only word for her is that one which of all others tell so ill upon the ear of Mrs. Jonathan Wild (*née* Snap). More significant than most of the riot of dirty-minded rancour is the passage in which Smollett is pleased to insinuate that Miss Matthews and Partridge are plagiarised from Miss Williams and Strap.

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with divers experiments in farce at which the Town was pleased to stop its nose ; and these, the Town being that way moved, he was easily persuaded to 'expunge': together, as he flattered himself, with 'every adventure, phrase, and insinuation that could be construed by the most delicate reader into a trespass upon the rules of decorum.' The *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*¹ he retained, and to this day they

¹ The *Lady of Quality*, Horace Walpole's 'living academy of love lore,' was Frances, Viscountess Vane, *née* Hawes. At nineteen, having no dowry but her beauty, which seems to have been complete, she married (1732) Lord William, 'second son by his second wife of James Douglas, Fourth Duke of Hamilton and First Duke of Brandon (*D.N.B.*)'; and, as Lord William had no more money than herself, Queen Caroline was pleased to describe the pair as 'the handsome beggars.' In 1734 Lord William died, and in 1735 she married the second Viscount Vane, and proceeded to lead the unhappy gentleman, who adored her, and for whom 'she always expressed an exaggerated abhorrence,' (*D.N.B.*) what is vaguely but expressly called 'a life.' As she danced the minuet with peculiar grace and finish, had no care for any one but herself, was capricious, insolent, extravagant *au possible*, and was a man's woman in every fibre of her being, her husband was soon the most flagrant cuckold in Europe. He never would divorce, however ; and, after being twenty years bedfast, at seventy-five she died Viscountess Vane. In the birth-year of *Peregrine Pickle*, being a woman of thirty-eight, she was, if *Pickle's* historian—(her 'subaltern admirer' Lady Mary terms him)—be a credible witness, a past-mistress of the art of pleasing—gay, beautiful, gracious, benevolent. Whether or not the said historian was ever in love with her, and whether or not there ever passed between them more 'civil things' (in Sir John Brute's phrase) than the communication of manuscript and coin, none knows, nor at this date will any know. What is certain is that *Peregrine* and the historian are extremely respectful to her ; and that her notion of explaining herself to the world through the means and by the aid of the Coming Novelist, was a touch of genius which her biographers have not honoured as they ought. I note, in her connexion, that Fielding (*Covent Garden Journal*, Jan. 14, 1752) remarks of 'one Peeragrin Puckle,' that 'his hopes of victory were found to be in vain.' Also, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu thought that, 'rightly understood,' the story of Lady Vane 'would be more instructive to young women than any

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Hard and
cruel and
cold.

are printed as an integral part of his novel. That novel is neither his best nor his worst ; but it is good enough even now, and in its hey-day it cannot but have seemed a piece of rare excellence. Like *Random*, it is hard and cruel and cold ; like *Random*, it is a welter of folly and ruffianism ; like *Random*, it touches you not as a work of art, but is remembered only as a thing of broken lights and disparted and intermittent achievement. But, like *Random*, it is invented and written with a brilliancy, an assurance, a masterful and easy adaptation of means to ends, that make the first reading, even in these days, an experience. Does any one recall his introduction in the fact to those riotous offences against the moral code whose presentment makes up the tragedy of the life and death of Punch ? 'Tis much the same with *Pickle*. Look at it in one humour, and from a certain point of view, and Peregrine—' the savage and ferocious Pickle ' (SCOTT) : the most truculent and unamiable scoundrel ever invested with heroic dignity—is, as the boy Dickens remembered *Random*, ' no ruffian, but a modest and engaging hero ' ; and Pipes, Trunnion, Gauntlett, Peregrine's bunter mistress, Hatchway, that notable

sermon ' ; for that there they might see ' what mortifications and varieties of misery are the unavoidable consequences of gallantry ' ; so that ' there is no rational creature that would not prefer the life of the strictest Carmelite to the round of hurry and misfortune she has gone through.' One would like to hear Lady Vane on Lady Mary. See further Lady Anne Hamilton (that illiberal shrew), *Epics of the Ton*, i. 21-22, (Third Edition, 1807) :—

Or with poor SMOLLET, fain for gold to tickle,
Wrought up with liquorish gust the feats of *Pickle* :—

and Note.

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naval wag, Emilia, that most disconcerting exemplar of Smollett's ideal of Virginity, Crabtree—even Crabtree!—are found, these and their fellows—Pallet, the fair Fleming, Old Pickle, Mrs. Trunnion, the Friar, the Poet, and the rest—are found to be in any case amusing. Viewed in another humour, and from another coign of speculation, they approve themselves the fantastic, sordid, indecent figments of humanity they are. It is farce, and farce again, and farce almost to the end: the saving touch being found in Trunnion, who, beginning as a rather ignoble caricature, grows more and more human as he goes on, till at the last he desires to be 'buried in the red jacket I had on when I boarded and took the *Renummy*,' and to have his epitaph written 'not in the Greek or Latin lingoes, and much less in the French, which I abominate, but in plain English,' to the end that 'when the angel comes to pipe *all hands* at the great day,¹ he may know that I am a British man, and speak to me in my mother-tongue.' All the death-bed is as good as this; and, having read it, one returns upon the consideration of Peregrine's achievements with a sour stomach and an unwilling eye: until one ends on the reflection that the half of Smollett was not told unto him, so that he never guessed, so contemptuous of everything but farce was he, how good a humorist, in the sense that Shakespeare and Fielding and Dickens are humorists, he might have been.

The excellence of Trunnion.

¹ Yet shall poor Tom find pleasant weather
When He, Who all commands,
Shall give, to call life's crew together,
The word to pipe all hands.

DIBDIN, *The Oddities*, 1789.

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Count Fathom. That he never so much as guessed at it is clear. There is no Bowling, no Morgan, no Pipes, no Hatchway even, in his next novel, *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), in which, if we subtract from it the 'Dedication'—(in which Smollett the novelist, being at this time a man of two-and-thirty, tells Smollett the doctor and man about town what he thinks of him)—and the admirable First Chapter, which is as good a piece of invention and writing as anything under the Trunnion-Lismahago level which Smollett ever did, there is not much to praise. Time was when *Fathom* seemed such a devil of a fellow that the story of his villainies was held to be dangerous and unedifying. But that time is long since with that which was 'when King Pepin of France was a little boy,' and your London 'prentice was admonished against the practice of killing uncles and consorting with Millwoods by the solemn performance of *George Barnwell*.¹ It is

¹ Says Mr. Walter Raleigh in his scholarly and excellent treatise, *The English Novel* (p. 188):—'It is a coarse morality at best that is taught by repulsion from vice, and the plea is often hypocritical.' That is true. But our grandsires thought not so; and it is also true that for a long time *Fathom* was accounted pernicious reading. If you had 'a good disposition and well-regulated mind,' you could not choose but hold him for 'a disgusting pollution of the imagination'; while, if you had not (I abridge the argument), you must certainly 'catch infection from stories of wickedness, and feel an insane impulse to emulate, and to realise, the pictures of villainy, which are embodied in such narratives as those of Zeluco or Count Fathom.' To say that this was written by—not Hannah More but—Walter Scott, is to say everything. 'Tis to be noted, however, that, always a good North Briton, Scott, if he cared little for *Fathom*, cared very much less for *Jonathan Wild*. He is at some pains to contrast the two, and the result of his effort is very much to the advantage of the later work. As, however, he has read the earlier to so little purpose that never for a moment is he conscious that it is a piece of pure

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hard to read *Count Fathom* now, for the simple reason that the Wicked Hero, and the Virtuous Hero, and the Virtuous Heroine, and all the figures in the book—which, by the way, sets forth in its impassioned parts an intolerable deal of blank verse disguised as prose—are sawdust all. 'Tis impossible to believe in the crimes of the one as in the sufferings of the others; and the sole care of him that reads is to get his reading done as soon as ever he can, and then forget what he has read as soon as ever he may. Yet the book is not without interests of its own. That Smollett valued it is plain—for, he revived his penitent scoundrel in a book written nearly twenty years after the publication of *Fathom*; and to me, at least, it is not incredible that, his vanity being what it was, he wrote this story of a villain to show how Fielding should have written that of Jonathan Wild. Be this as it may, there are attempts at terror in *Fathom* which are unique, so far as I know, in the early English Novel.¹ Again, there is never a champion of Smollett, however passionate and whole-hearted,

irony; as he is even moved to entertain 'a suspicion' that Fielding 'used the title of *Jonathan Wild* in order to connect his book with the popular renown of that infamous depredator'—that, in plain English, he is dealing with a chap-book—we may treat his opinion as Captain Shandy would have treated that work which the great Lipsius composed the day he was born.

¹ The 'Night in a Forest' was long quoted as an example of the Truly-Awful. It is nothing of the kind—now. But there is no doubt that the writer, anticipating the Fat Boy in *Pickwick* by near a century, attempted of set purpose to make his readers' flesh creep; and there is none that he succeeded in his endeavour. Novel also is the figure of the Benevolent Jew, which, however unreal in outline and ungainly in effect, at once passed into literature. As for the Hero-Villain, his descendants are innumerable.

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but must admit that, as literature, *Fathom* is a failure. All the same, it is a lasting testimony to the vivacity, the adventurous apprehensiveness, of Smollett's mind ; and wooden as it seems to us, and fatuous as we may esteem the writer's treatment of the theory of romance set forth in it, it has a place in the Romantic Revival which is not shared by any book of its time.

IV

*Sir
Lancelot
Greaves.*

SMOLLETT'S next novel, *Sir Lancelot Greaves*, was published in 1762 : it shows him at his nadir. His next, *Humphry Clinker*, was published nine years after that—in 1771 : it shows him at his zenith. Between-whiles he published his translation of *Don Quixote* (1755) and his *History and Adventures of an Atom* (1769). The latter is political and filthy. The former is strenuous but disfeaturing. Where was the novelist Smollett in the meanwhile?

Smollett a
practising
physician.

The answer is to be found in the circumstances of his career as (1) a would-be practising physician, and (2) a kind of high-class bookseller's hack. In 1750 he was made M.D. by Dalgetty's old *alma mater*, Marischal College, Aberdeen. He is said to have repaired to Bath, and sought, but failed, to work up a practice there. He certainly wrote a treatise on the hygienic, therapeutic, and prophylactic properties of water externally applied ; and in this work (1752) he essayed to show that any water would do as well as the waters discovered by King Bladud—which, as Mr. Hannay has remarked, was an odd and very personal way of recommending

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himself to the inhabitants of Bladud's town. It was all to no purpose: he had not, it would seem, that 'good bedside manner,' in whose absence even Æsculapius were damned; he was impatient of pretence, contemptuous of authority; in a word, like the tragedy submitted to Mr. Rich by Hogarth's Rake, he would 'not do.' So he gave up the struggle, settled with his wife and daughter at Monmouth House, in Laurence Street, Chelsea, and betook himself to—not literature, as at the start, but—journalism, or the equivalent of journalism, for a living. In 1753 and thereabouts he was pressed for money; ¹ for the translation of *Don Quixote*, to which he had perforce to devote his energy and time, had been paid for years before, and the West Indian property suspended payments. But, the Cervantes finished, and these difficulties tided over, he so prospered in his avocation, that for long his income is said to have run as high as £600 to £700 a year. The reason was that, whereas he had created, he was now content to criticise and compile. So far as I know, there is nothing like it in our literary history.² The translation of *Don Quixote* was in a sense imaginative; for Smollett, however well or ill he understood his illustrious original³ essayed in it (or I am mistaken) so to

A book-seller's hack.

¹ In the December of 1754 the stage between London and Chelsea was 'held up,' and Smollett lost his watch and a purse of guineas.

² It is inconceivable, of course; but try to conceive of Dickens, after *Nicholas Nickleby*, abandoning fiction, and declining upon the production of small but very personal reviews for the genteel, and the compilation of historical and economical abstracts for the general.

³ 'Be a Romance or Farce-writer, raise contributions by

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coarsen, so to vulgarise Cervantes, as to exalt him, at any rate in the matter of style, to a level with those notable masters of 'humorous' English, Tom Brown the facetious and the inimitable Ned Ward. However this be, the *Quixote* took its place and had its day, and was duly succeeded (1756) by the seven volumes of a *Compendium of Authentic and Entertaining Voyages digested in a Chronological Sequence*, and by the establishment in the February of the same year of the once famous *Critical Review*.

The Critical Review.

'Written by a Society of Gentlemen,' *The Critical Review* was financed and founded by one Archibald Hamilton,¹ a Scots printer who had quitted Edinburgh for reasons not unconnected with the Porteous Riots. It was designed to rival that

another *Regicide*, translate from the French, or *si Dts placet*, murder the Spanish.' Thus Grainger in a certain *Letter* of which we shall hear more. An anonymous *Letter from a Gentleman in the Country to a Friend in Town* (1755), made light of Smollett's Spanish; and Lord Woodhouselee described the translation as a vamp from Jervas.

¹ Hamilton comes in for hard knocks in Smollett's company. Thus, Churchill in *The Apology* :—

To HAMILTON's the ready lies repair—
Ne'er was lie made which was not welcome there—
Hence, on maturer judgment's anvil wrought,
The polished falsehood's into public brought.
Quick-circulating slanders mirth afford
And reputation bleeds in every word.

Thus, too, Cuthbert Shaw, in *The Race* (1766) :—

To clinch the cause, and fuel add to fire,
Behind came Hamilton, his trusty squire. . . .
'Hear my resolve, and first by God I swear,
By Smollett and his gods, whoe'er shall dare
With him this day for glorious fame to vie
Sous'd in the bottom of the ditch shall lie;
And know, the world no other shall confess,
While I have crab-tree life, or letterpress.'

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Monthly Review, which Ralph Griffiths, Tom Davies's friend, had begun to publish seven years before (1749) at the sign of the Dunciad in St. Paul's Churchyard, and by which he is said to have profited at one time by as much as £2000 a year (*D. N. B.*). From the first it was edited, and largely written, by Smollett; and in 1758 his conduct of it, always high-handed and adventurous, got him into serious trouble. The manner was this. In 1757, acting under Hawke, Admiral Sir Charles Knowles, an experienced but unamiable seaman, and Sir John Mordaunt, an amiable but accomplished soldier, failed in the surprising of Rochefort, and the adventure, which, as Wolfe (he served under Mordaunt) held, should have profited us hugely, was held mighty dear at a million sterling. Mordaunt was court-martialled and found not guilty. Knowles was only assailed in print and by the public voice; but he was of an acrimonious habit, and he put out a pamphlet¹ setting forth divers reasons why it should be thought that he, Admiral Knowles, was not to blame. This pamphlet was sent to *The Critical Review*; and Smollett, who had known of Knowles since that bad business at Cartagena, where he commanded the *Weymouth*, said plainly that there was nothing in it, and that Knowles's case was never a pin the better for it. The Admiral, being of a different mind, brought an action against the printer, Hamilton, but declared, by the mouth of his counsel, that his sole object in going to law was to discover the writer, to the end that he might

Its treatment of Admiral Knowles.

¹ *The Conduct of Admiral Knowles on a late Expedition Set in a True Light.* London: 1758.

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demand the satisfaction due to a gentleman and a man of honour. Smollett's behaviour was, as the saying is, 'a little mixed.' To begin with, he wrote to his friend John Wilkes, stating that he 'wished to see the prosecution quashed'; that he would like Wilkes, with certain 'gentlemen . . . my friends,' to 'talk with those who are supposed to have influence with the Admiral'; and that, 'if the affair cannot be compromised, we intend to kick up a dust, and die hard': that, in short, the 'foolish Admiral' had better hold his peace, and 'not further provoke the resentment of' Mr. Wilkes's 'Very obliged humble servant, T. Smollett.' This could only mean, of course, that Knowles, like Trunnion, must either 'get up and be spliced' with Smollett, by compounding his action, or 'lie still and be d——d' in the eternal enmity of *The Critical Review*. Thus the blackmailer, the tyrant-in-type, in Smollett. The man of honour being every whit as vivacious and as instant, he acknowledged his authorship of the offending article the moment it was question of the arbitrament of arms; when Knowles, as promptly lodged an action against him, and carried a verdict for a fine of £100 and three months' imprisonment in the King's Bench prison.¹ Smollett, for once entirely in the right, and in funds

¹ Says Walter Scott, and there is none who will disagree with him:—'How the Admiral reconciled his conduct to the rules usually observed by gentlemen, we are not informed; but the proceeding seems to justify even Smollett's strength of expression when he terms him an officer without resolution, and a man without veracity.' And Mr. Hannay:—'Admiral Knowles seems decidedly to have belonged to the class of naval officers who had to be "encouraged" by the shooting of Admiral Byng.' And so, with an 'unmelodious twang' the Admiral's ghost departs the precincts of this Edition.

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besides, appears to have taken his mischance with excellent temper. He paid his fine, and he served his term ; and I doubt not that he presently made the best of his bad bargain in *Sir Lancelot Greaves*.

This, the most serious of Smollett's quarrels, was neither the first one nor the last. He was addicted, as his *Travels* shows, to the *argumentum baculinum* ; and in 1753, soon after his establishment in Chelsea, he had applied it in the case of a certain Peter Gordon, with the result that he got the worst in a court of law, besides being grossly insulted (or so he conceived) by the plaintiff's counsel, one Hume Campbell.¹ Five years later (1758), he fell foul of Grainger's translation of Tibullus in the December number of *The Critical Review*. This performance he berated and belittled with much of his wonted pertness ;² and when Grainger retorted upon him—(which he did, with a great deal of asperity³ in a long-forgotten *Letter to Tobias*

The *argumentum baculinum*.

Grainger.

¹ According to Smollett, Gordon borrowed money of him, and instead of repaying it, took sanctuary in the rules of Bench, and thence addressed him in insulting messages. As for Hume Campbell, the defendant not only abused him roundly, but challenged him to mortal combat. The letter of challenge, however, never reached its address, and found its way into print as late as 1784, when a rough draft, 'which seems to have been sent to Daniel Mackercher, the Mr. M—— of *Peregrine Pickle*' (HANNAY), appeared in *The European Magazine*. For the rest, Smollett's exasperation was but natural. For one thing, he hated to seem in the wrong ; and for another, he was at this time (1753-1756) hard pressed for cash.

² 'Feud,' he says, is a Scotch word, 'redoubtable' a French one ; while 'noiseless' is such English as no decent writer would stoop to use. Also, he likens one of Grainger's images to a scene in the Bloody Bowl in Hanging Sword Alley.

³ Smollett, like his own Matthew Bramble, disliked his first Christian name ; and Grainger, who seems to have been at one time known to him, was careful to touch this raw, and to refer to 'Dr. Toby' when and where he could.

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Smollett, M.D.)—Smollett wound up a kind of half-hearted apology¹ for his first article with a denunciation in form. ‘Whereas,’ he says, ‘one of the owls belonging to the proprietor of *The M—thly R——w*, which answers to the name of Grainger, hath suddenly broken from his mew, where he used to hoot in darkness and peace, and now screeches openly in the face of day, we shall take the first opportunity to chastise this troublesome owl, and drive him back to his original obscurity.’ The ‘first opportunity’ occurred no later than Mr. Hamilton’s next issue; when the unhappy Grainger—(by the way, as a *Monthly Reviewer* he was naturally incapable of aught but infamy in Smollett’s eye)—was fustigated without ruth, yet not wholly to the credit of him that held the rods.² Came the turn (1760) of the ridiculous

¹ *The Critical Review*, January 1759.

² Here—premising that ‘old women’ refers to Mrs. Griffiths, who was supposed to ‘edit’ her husband’s authors—here are some warblings of his muse (*Critical Review*, February 1759):—‘. . . Dr. James Grainger, who, for many years, has been endeavouring, in the shade of obscurity, to earn a subsistence . . . who has condescended to piece the compilations of superannuated dulness at the bookseller’s lowest price, and even been obliged to pay a printer’s journeyman for translating his copy into English . . . Dr. Grainger ought to remember how he was rejected as a writer in a certain Biographical Dictionary; and in what manner he has laboured, as an obscure hireling, in the *Monthly Review*, under the inspection and correction of an illiterate bookseller; who has often declared that he (Grainger) had some learning and taste, but could not write a sentence of English. . . . *The Critical Review* is not written by a parcel of obscure hirelings, under the restraint of a bookseller and his wife, who presume to revise, alter, and amend the articles occasionally. The principal writers in *The Critical Review* are unconnected with booksellers, unawed by old women, and independent of each other. . . . When we hear Dr. Grainger accuse Dr. Smollett of being biased in his integrity by a good dinner, we are

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John Hall-Stevenson, whose pretensions to wit and taste and artistry were as savagely exposed as they deserved to be ; and in *A Nosegay and a Simile for the Reviewers* :—

Hall-Stevenson.

Ye Overseers and Reviewers
Of all the Muses and the Sewers,
Who dwell on high,
Enthroned among your peers,
The Gazetteers :—

and the *Two Epistles of Margery the Cookmaid* (1762), that heavy-handed, ineffectual exemplar of pruriency, made bold to tell the *Critical* Reviewers what he, the would-be La Fontaine,¹ was pleased to think of them. Smollett's best opposite was of a very different stamp. The truculence, the hardness, the ferocity inherent in Charles Churchill were equal with his own ; and when *The Critical*

Charles Churchill.

inclined to believe that the imputation comes from a hungry belly, when the accuser feels the full force of the temptation. If that was the case, he might have fed himself into better humour without going fifty miles from London. All those who are acquainted with Dr. Smollett know, that for every dinner he ever received, he has given fifty at least ; and that his house is always open to those who have recourse to his hospitality. . . . We dive not into private characters and circumstances with a view to personal abuse : that task we leave to the polite and worthy Dr. James Grainger, and his associates : for, we are informed that all this filth did not flow from the same dunghill. It is a muddy stream supplied from three different reservoirs of dulness and malice. . . . We might expatiate upon the translator's great sagacity in chastening and reforming the tenth elegy, which Tibullus addresses to his catamite. . . . I will end this note by reporting that, according to Johnson, ' *The Critical* Reviewers often reviewed without reading the books through,' whereas the *Monthly* men, being ' duller fellows,' were glad to read what was asked of them.

¹ He was Yorick's Eugenius—the life-long friend of Sterne. But a more despicable poetaster than this eighteenth-century Yorkshire imitator of the inimitable has rarely put pen to paper.

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Review declared that *The Rosciad* (1760) was the work of—not Churchill but—Lloyd and Colman, the satirist fell to his tools, and, in *The Apology* (1761), struck back at his assailant with all the strength of his arm. It is not for me to analyse the performance. I need but note that Churchill is careful to report the fact, or confirm the rumour, of Smollett's jealousy:—

Whence could arise this mighty critic spleen ;
The Muse a trifler, and her theme so mean ?
What had I done that angry Heaven should send
The bitt'rest foe where most I wish'd a friend ?
Oft hath my tongue been wanton at thy name,
And hail'd the honours of thy matchless fame.
For me let hoary FIELDING bite the ground,
So nobler *Pickle* stands superbly bound.
From LIVY's temples tear th' historic crown,
Which with more justice blooms upon thine own.
Compar'd with thee be all life-writers dumb
But he who wrote the *Life of Tommy Thumb*.

Follows that description of *The Regicide* which is cited some pages back ; and though, in the rest of *The Apology*, the satirist leaves Smollett alone and deals with the gang in general, he renews his attack in *The Ghost* (1762):—

Some, the more subtle of their race,
(Who felt some touch of coward ¹ grace

¹ It was held a special iniquity in the staff of *The Critical Review* that its members were anonymous. Cf. *The Apology*:—

Conscious of guilt, and fearful of the light,
They lurk enshrouded in the vale of night ;
Safe from detection, seize the unwary prey,
And stab, like bravoës, all who come that way.

And the nameless writer of a certain *Apology Addressed to the*

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Who Tyburn to avoid had wit,
But never fear'd deserving it)
Came to their brother SMOLLETT's aid,
And carried on the critic trade.

And in *The Author* (1763) he has at his enemy for
(so far as I know) the last time :—

How do I laugh when PUBLIUS, hoary grown
In zeal for Scotland's welfare, and his own . . .
Too mean (the worst of curses Heav'n can send)
To have a foe, too proud to have a friend,
Erring by form, which blockheads sacred hold,
Ne'er making new forms, and ne'er mending old :—

and all the rest of it. Smollett declares that it was not he who reviewed *The Rosciad*. Be this the case or not, they were few indeed, if any, who held that Churchill's ink was spilled in vain. For some years Smollett was *The Critical Review*, and *The Critical Review* was Smollett ; and there can be no manner of doubt that though he could, and did, apologise upon occasion—as he did to Home and

Reviewers (1762), while less explicit, is not less resentful. His Muse, he tells you, is 'Shock'd by the thought of SM-LL-TT's butch'ring skill,' but he is none the less resolved to unpack his heart about the wicked in the train of one who, 'like PROTEUS-H-LL,' is qualified 'To mangle nature both with pen and pill' :—

Of CALEDONIAN boors a slavish race,
At once their country's and their own disgrace ;
Who, driven by itch and poverty from home,
Like hungry wolves in search of plunder roam :—

And he pines for the advent of a better and more amiable time, and a more potent hand :—

Oh ! might he then the glorious cause pursue,
And bring ye trembling to the public view ;
Tear ev'ry paltry, mean disguise away,
And bear your rancour to the blaze of day.

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Richardson—it amused him to play the literary huff-snuff, and that he did his hectoring with so much spirit as to make himself cordially detested by a great many of his fellow lieges.¹

After 1748, the year of *Roderick Random*, Smollett, Mr. Seccombe tells us, 'became a centre of attraction to the group of able Scotsmen who were now in London, and especially to those of the medical profession, such as Clephane, Macaulay, Hunter, Armstrong, Pitcairne, and Smellie.' There is proof that he remained such a centre of attraction always; but during these later years he was rather notorious than conspicuous. He went not, as the saying is, into society, but lived a life of his own, partly (I take it) because he must, but chiefly (it is evident) because he would, in a little world con-

¹ Another reviler was the notorious Shebbeare :—

The same abusive, base, abandoned thing
When pilloried or pensioned by a king :—

who hated and despised him as a Scot, and would have none of him as an historian, and whom he flogged at the cart's tail (so to speak) as the Ferret of *Sir Lancelot Greaves*. Yet another was Joseph Reed, the dramatist, whose mock-tragedy, *Madrigal and Trulletta*, he scouted and scorned in *The Critical Review* for August 1758. To excel in parody and burlesque, he opined, even in 'the highest degree of perfection they are capable of attaining to,' was within the means 'of a very moderate capacity.' Reed, retorting on his 'dear Toby' in *A Sop in the Pan for a Physical Crittck* (1759), would not agree to this; declared that none but a fool or a knave would 'publicly assert' that Henry Fielding, author of *Tom Thumb the Great*, was 'of a very moderate capacity'; and in the sequel argued that his critic's contempt for *Madrigal and Trulletta* was inspired by the fact that it included parodies of *The Regicide*. He challenges Smollett to answer him. And, says he victoriously :—'I am afraid your Reply will cut a very indifferent Figure, as you have manifestly exhausted your Vein of Humour in the composition of *Roderick Random*, the best (I was going to add the only tolerable) Piece you have published.'

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trived and ordered by himself, in which there was no king but him. His credentials were of the best ; yet he seems never to have had the entry into the Johnson set.¹ He came of a good stock, and could always make a figure ; yet the world knew him not, but was content with knowing of him. One reason is, no doubt, that he worked so hard that he left himself little or no leisure. Another, and a stronger, is that he followed his own likings, and was better pleased in a company which he could oblige and domineer than in one wherein he moved on an equal footing with those he met. As it would seem, he set out to make himself a kind of monarch in Grub Street. In 1758, 'Jupiter' Carlyle, who had known him years before,² found him in London, and wrote of the Smollett he found. Robertson, the historian, wanted to meet Smollett ; Carlyle arranged the meeting ; it came off at a coffee-house (Forrest's). So far, so good ; but 'he was now become a great man, and, being much of a humourist, was not to be put out of his way' ; and when we—Home and I, and Smith and Robertson ('tis Carlyle that speaks)—arrived at Forrest's, 'he had several of his minions about him, to whom he prescribed tasks of translation, compilation, or abridgement.' Then, 'we dined together, and Smollett was very brilliant.' Then, 'that we might spend the evening together,' he 'begged leave to

A monarch
in Grub
Street.

His meeting
with
Robertson.

¹ This, though he is found asking Wilkes's interest in the case of Francis Barber, Johnson's black servant, who had been taken by a press-gang.

² During the '45, when Smollett wrote *The Tears of Scotland*, a copy of verses in which he got nearer to poetry than in all the rhymes he ever made.

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withdraw for an hour that he might give audience to his myrmidons' ; but 'we insisted that it should be in the room in which we sat.' Of course, 'the Doctor agreed,' and some five of the 'myrmidons' were introduced. The Doctor kept two of them to supper, to make sport for his hosts, 'whispering to us' ('tis always Carlyle that speaks) 'that he believed they would amuse us, which they certainly did, for they were very curious characters.' It is pleasing to know that Robertson, who, being a simple-minded man, with no skill in the world's ways, had looked to meet another Pickle, or at least another Random, in Smollett, 'expressed great surprise at the polished and agreeable manners and the great urbanity of his conversation.' Yet another picture of him is found in *Humphry Clinker*, in which, speaking by the mouth of Jerry Melford, he paints himself in the act of playing the host to his 'unfortunate brothers of the quill,' for whom he was at pains to provide a Sunday regale of 'beef, pudding and potatoes, port, punch, and Calvert's entire butt-beer.' 'Tis an amusing and a graphic piece of work, and it shows the Doctor as he wished to be seen—feeding, hectoring, tipping ; a kind of *bourru bienfaisant*, ever forward with such jests as only a person in authority can break, and ever ready with a skinfull and a crown-piece for the wretches on whom those jests were broken. This, as I have said, is how he wished to appear and be remembered ; yet I know not if it make us like him any the better. Indeed, I have come upon nothing so much to the discredit of Grub Street as that it ate Dr. Toby's dinners and pocketed Dr. Toby's advances at the same time

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that it endured his benevolence, and pocketed his contempt.¹

V

WITHAL, these years of quarrelling were the busiest of his busy life. In 1755, the *Don Quixote* off his hands, he revisited Scotland after an absence of sixteen years,² and, returning to London, was soon neck-deep into that quag of journey-work—editing, reviewing, writing to order—his preference for which, at the very top of his career, appears, as I have said, to stamp him ‘solely singular’ among creative artists. In 1756 came his *Compendium of*

Scotland
revisited.

¹ Here, no doubt, in these Chelsea Sundays, is the ground for Smollett's boast to Grainger :—‘ All those who are acquainted with Dr. Smollett know that for every dinner he has ever received, he has given fifty at least,’ etc. Mr. Hannay institutes an apt and telling reference to the dinners which Archibald Constable, *teste* John Ballantyne, ‘ regaled, among others, his own circle of literary serfs,’ at Polton, with the very judicious reflection that Smollett describes himself, whom (as we know) he loved and esteemed above all mankind, while the description of the Polton revels is the work of one who did not love the master of them. If it seem a pity—and to many it will—that Smollett saw nothing in his parasites but what he has reported, and left the F. B. and the Shandon, and the Pendennis (even !) of the period unhonoured and unsung, the answer is that Smollett was not Thackeray, and that to him the Grub Street person was merely an occasion for rather savage farce : much as Henry Fielding had been some years before the spunging oddities described by Jerry Melford were come upon the scene.

² He found his sister prosperously married to a Mr. Telfer, and his mother staying under her roof at Scotston, Peeblesshire : a small estate which Telfer had been able to buy. It is told of the novelist that he chose to be introduced to Mrs. Smollett as a gentleman who had known her son in the East Indies, and that he remained unrecognised, until he chanced to lose his serious look, when the mother said :—‘ Your old, roguish smile betrayed you at once.’ It is not the prettiest of stories ; but it goes far to show that, outside literature, Smollett had his emotions mighty well in hand.

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Authentic and Entertaining Voyages; and in 1757, thanks to the Garrick whom he not so very long before had rotted (there is really no other word) as Mr. Marmozet, he won his way to the stage with *The Reprisal*, a two-act farce, in which, with great dexterity, and a regard for the mint and anise and cummin of the drama which goes far to induce the belief that there was a good cheap playwright lost in him,¹ he took his revenge, once for all, for the Hackwork, shameful betrayal of *The Regicide*. In 1757-58, he published, in four quartos, his *History of England*: a work on which he spent some twenty months, for which he read upwards of three hundred volumes, and for which he pocketed as much as £2000.² In 1758-60 he edited the *Modern Part of an Universal History*. In 1761 he started a translation of Voltaire,³ and contributed to *The British Review*, which he is said to have edited in conjunction with Goldsmith, his fourth and feeblest novel, *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot Greaves*.⁴

¹ He brings on the stage-Frenchman, the stage-Irishman, the stage-Scotchman, the stage-sailor—above all, the stage-sailor; and he brings them on with undeniable stage-spirit. *The Reprisal*, in short, is said to have held the boards for fifty years, and in the end to have done essential service to the Marryat of *The Three Cutters*.

² It was 'followed the next year by a revised edition, published in monthly numbers at the price of one shilling each,' and 'continued to the year 1762, ten years later.'—HANNAY, *Smollett*, p. 125.

³ 'With notes Historical and Critical. By Dr. Smollett and Others.' London: 1761-1774. In thirty-eight volumes.

⁴ It was published as a serial, and may very well have been the first piece of fiction written in English to that end. Two of Defoe's—*Robinson Crusoe* (First Part) and *Captain Singleton*—had been so published, but both had existed for some time in book form.

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Then, in 1762-63 (May-February) he edited *The Briton*, a journal established in Bute's interest, which had scarce any circulation, cost him his friendship with Wilkes, and at last died in his hands, in circumstances that left him 'stung, aggravated, and humiliated beyond endurance' (HANNAY). He was in wretched health at the time of this gross and exasperating failure. A sedentary life had told heavily upon him; what he himself described as a *systema nervosum maximé irritabile* had altogether broken up, and he was incurably rheumatic and scorbutic; worst of all, he had been made desperate, it may be almost distraught, by the loss, early in 1763, of his only child.¹ Nothing was left him but change of air and circumstance and scene; so in the June of the same black year he started for the Riviera and for Italy, and remained abroad until the early spring of 1765. It was a dreary time. When he left England he was a man 'traded by malice' — (Wilkes's no doubt: the friend whom, in Bute's interest, he had cursed in print by all his gods) — 'persecuted by faction, abandoned by false patrons' — (Bute, to wit) — and, above all, 'overwhelmed by the sense of a domestic calamity which it was not in the power of fortune to repair': so he lived angrily, or gloomily, or both, and saw things with a peevish eye, and, for his pains, was dubbed the 'learned Smelfungus' by that brisk young Sentimental Traveller, the Reverend Laurence Sterne.²

A journey
abroad.

¹ She had come to fifteen, but died, after all, of what is now called tubercle. 'Whom the gods love die young.' Whom the gods love not — !

² 'The learned Smelfungus travelled from Boulogne to Paris, from Paris to Rome — and so on; — but he set out with

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What was still worse, his recovery was but partial. For a time he stood to his guns with the old energy, the old fortitude : he wrote and published the sequel to his *History of England* ; he wrote (or finished) and published his *Travels through France and Italy* ; he lived much at Bath, and paid a lingering last visit to Scotland, where he was acclaimed and welcomed as he deserved, and collected much material for his ripest and soundest book ; he, finally, ‘cleansed his stuffed bosom of such perilous stuff’ as Wilkes; and Bute, and Pitt, and Time, and the Gods, and the *Monthly Reviewers* had choked it withal, by publishing (1769) *The Adventures of an Atom*, in which he hit out all round, bemerded everything and everybody, and satisfied himself, apparently, that there was but one just man alive, and his name—it need scarcely be said—was Tobias George Smollett. That done, he bethought him seriously of himself, for his health was worse than ever, and turned his mind south once more.

He would fain have had an Italian consulship. But he was elderly and broken ; it was held that he could neither bless nor ban to any purpose now ; and, though Hume did all with Shelburne that he

spleen and jaundice, and every object he passed by was discoloured or distorted.—He wrote an account of them, but ’twas nothing but the account of his miserable feelings. . . . I met Smelfungus in the grand portico of the Pantheon ;—he was just coming out of it. “ ’Tis nothing but a huge cock-pit,” said he . . . “ I’ll tell it,” cried Smelfungus, “ to the world.” “ You had better tell it,” said I, “ to your physician.”—*A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. By Laurence Sterne. Smollett is hard, but not too hard, on the Medicean Venus ; but the worst that I can say about him is that, on the whole, his prince of painters seems to be—not Raphael, nor even Titian, but—Guido Reni.

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could, there was never a consulship for Smollett. So he had even to do without one ; and, leaving England in the winter of 1768, and travelling by way of Pisa (where he was visited by Sir Horace Mann) and Lucca, he got as far as Leghorn, and there set up his rest in a villa, with a noble outlook, in the shadow of Monte Nero. Here he drudged out what was due from him to the *Modern Universal History* ; and here, despite worsening health and failing strength,¹ he wrote his masterpiece—His masterpiece. which is also one of the masterpieces of the English Novel—the excellent *Adventures of Humphry Clinker*.² It was published early in 1771, and in the September of that year the end came. ‘All is His death. well, my dear,’ he said to his wife, who had nursed and tended him with unfailing affection ; and these were his last words. So passed the old stark pagan—the man to whom the world was as it were a great extension of the Bench or the Fleet : ‘in which we are all playthings of fortune.’ He was buried, within sight of the sea, in the old English cemetery in the Via degl’ Eglisi at Leghorn ; and three years later, his cousin James set up a ‘tall Tuscan column’

¹ His spirit was ever indomitable. ‘If,’ he writes to John Hunter (Leghorn, January 9, 1771), ‘I can prevail upon my wife to execute my last will, you shall receive my poor carcass in a box . . . to be placed among your rarities. I am already so dry and emaciated that I may pass for an Egyptian mummy without any other preparation than some pitch and painted linen ; unless you think I may deserve the denomination of a curiosity in my own character, I mean that of your old friend and affectionate humble servant.’ It is a brave letter (of its kind), and takes its place, not unhandsomely, with the last utterances of Cervantes and Fielding.

² Thus described by Horace Walpole : ‘A party novel, written by that profligate hireling, Smollett, to vindicate the Scots, and cry down juries.’

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in his honour on the banks of Leven, with an inscription which had the honour to be rewritten and revised by Dr. Johnson in the course of that tour to the Hebrides which he made, in Mr. Boswell's company, in 1774.¹

I have said nothing of *Sir Lancelot Greaves* for the simple reason that I find so little merit in it that I have no more than that to say. Here and there are glimpses of the true Smollett, and Captain Crowe, in other circumstances, and as anything else than a foolish, futile essay in burlesque knight-errantry, could scarce fail to be amusing: even as *Sir Lancelot*, were he anything but an impossible travesty of Don Quixote might, it is reasonable to suppose, have proved himself a more or less interesting hero. But the initial blunder was Smollett's; and he must pay for it to the end of time. It is other-guess work with *Humphry Clinker*, wherein there is little or nothing, once you admit the scheme, and are prepared to take on all its consequences, that is not excellent. To say that the stinks and nastinesses are done with peculiar gusto is to say that Smollett remained himself until the end; and that, when you leave Bath behind you and have got to Edinburgh, and Mrs. Jenkins is telling you all she knows—that, I say, is to your

*Humphry
Clinker.*

¹ Had Smollett lived four years more, he would have succeeded to the family estate of Bonhill, which, he being dead, passed to his sister, Jean. His widow appears to have been in receipt of a kind of pension from Bonhill and the Telfers. She lived on at Leghorn, and in 1782 a fire deprived her of the last of her Jamaican property. She appealed to the public; and on March 3rd, 1784, she took a benefit at the Edinburgh Theatre. The play was *Venice Preserved*; the profits amounted to £366. That is the last heard of her.

SMOLLETT

everlasting entertainment. More: Smollett is no longer the flaunting, swaggering cynic of *Random* and *Pickle*; he is old and kind; above all, he has read *Tristram Shandy*. His characters—Bramble, Tabitha, Winifred Jenkins, Humphry, Lismahago—are instantly yet humanely apprehended and incomparably well presented; the humour is ever kindly and sane; there is never a word, much less an adventure, to make you half-sorry in the reading; the Quicklyisms of Winifred and Mrs. Tabitha fall luscious and inevitable, like honey from the comb; in fine, save in the good parts of Dickens, there is no more cheerful, no more diverting reading in English fiction than the good parts of this notable book. It is the only one in which Smollett comes within measurable distance of Fielding; and I do not know that Fielding himself has done anything very much better than Lismahago:¹ Lismahago, the first real Scotsman to plant a foot in English letters; the Adam of a great and ever-multiplying brood! On the whole it is scarce possible, and it might well be held mischievous, to hope for a recrudescence of popularity for *Random* and *Pickle*. But they will long be read, I take it, and read because their author was also the author of *Humphry Clinker*.

VI

SMOLLETT'S chief fault is a certain hard and shameless indelicacy of imagination and perception, which

Smollett's
chief fault.

¹ The lieutenant, it appears, is doubly beneficent. He is himself, for one thing; and for another (*teste* Walter Scott) he is the spiritual ancestor of Rittmeister Dugald Dalgetty.

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makes it impossible for him to enter deeply or sympathetically into some essentials of human character, and to say anything worth heeding of the niceties of human intercourse. There is no greater ruffian in literature than Roderick Random, unless it be Peregrine Pickle; yet he started with the notice that in Roderick he would incarnate 'modest merit'; and in the end he is perfectly satisfied with his results. And Roderick, between the first and last chapters of his history, scarce ever appears excepting as a sharking rascal, who has few other virtues than the very doubtful one of being as free with his own money as he is with other people's, and whose selfishness is of so lusty a type that he is content to reward his faithful Strap with, as Scott said, a cast mistress and a Highland farm. Of this hero's original relations with Miss Williams I forbear to speak: the curious may look into them for themselves. Here I shall but note that there is in them a peculiarity of squalor, an intimate and ineradicable unpleasantness, which make the lady's subsequent connexion with Narcissa one of the unpardonable things in fiction.¹ Nobody minds, however, in the book; and as Narcissa herself is moved to distinguish 'modest merit' in a footman's habit, one may infer that Narcissa, did she know, would mind as little as Miss Williams does, or Roderick, or the common author of their being. And this same indelicacy is of the very stuff of Smollett's mind. You would say that, thanks to

¹ I open a parenthesis to note, in passing, that in these days Miss Williams would pretty certainly behave in the manner of the Second Mrs. Tanqueray.

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his Scots breeding, or his professional training, or both, he had neither sense of privacy nor olfactory nerves. More: he is indecent naturally, yet deliberately: indecent because he must be, but also because he will. People talk and write about the 'cynicism' of Thackeray. If they want the real thing—(but they don't)—let them look for it in the Smollett of *Random* and *Pickle*. They will find more in a single character of the earlier artist's—his Crabtree, say—than there is in all the sentimental carplings of the Middle-Victorian moralist; and they will think better of their Thackeray than they have ever thought before.

I have said what I believe to be the worst that His master can be said of Smollett. Now for the other side. quality. He has—and I take it to be his master-quality—a peculiar power of realising a character, not by description and analysis but, out of the character's own mouth. He sees his people mostly as personages in a farce; but he knows all he wants you to know about them from the beginning, and with three strokes of his pen he makes you also know it. His Morgan, for instance: is it possible to forget that first appearance in the surgeon's berth of H.M.S. *Thunder*? It is all over in no time (so to say); yet, once and forever, there is Morgan. It is the same, in a greater or less degree, with Weazle and Miss Ramper, with Narcissa's aunt and Pipes and Hatchway, with Jack Rattlin and Oakum and Mrs. Trunnion-Hatchway, with Potion and Crab and Lavement, with Winifred Jenkins and Tabitha Bramble and Jackson: in fact, with almost any one of the many whom their author deigns to indi-

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vidualise. And when he goes deeper—when he is interested enough to be intimate—then you get creations like Bowling and Trunnion, like Lismahago and Matthew Bramble, like Pipes and Strap ; and with these you are well into literature. And his narrative is of the same instant, peremptory type. He writes good, nervous forth-right English ; knows exactly what he wants to say ; and says it exactly as he means it to be said : as, to take three very different examples, the story of Random and Strap in London, the ‘night in the Forest’ episode in *Fathom*, and that unparalleled digression concerning Pipes and the beggar maid, which does so much to reconcile one with the ostentatious blackguardism of *Pickle*—as these, I say, exist to show. Comes in the last instance, Smollett the humourist—hard and immodest but copious and authentic, if in the main inalterably farcical ; and, as I think, the secret of the perennial popularity of some (at least) of him lies open, even to him that runs and reads.

Says Mr. Raleigh,¹ finally :—‘His zest in life is real and infectious, and his purely external treatment gives a certain refreshing quality to his pages ; over his books at least it is possible to “unbend the mind.”’ That, if our standard be that of great literature, is good enough for Smollett ; and I know not if there be more to say about him. But literature is not all great ; and outside the pleasaunce, where Fielding ironises with Cervantes, and Shakespeare discusses an intonation with Dickens, while Scott and Thackeray pause in their talk to hear

¹ *The English Novel*, p. 189.

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what's said, and Sterne reads Trim and Toby and 'My Father' into them all—outside, I say, the scene of these august familiarities there is honourable room for Smollett. For, take it how you will, he anglicised Le Sage, and so was one ancestor of *Pickwick*; he created Pipes and Trunnion and Bowling, and in this wise cleared the way for Chucks, and Mesty, and O'Brien—to name but these; in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* he struck a note and suggested a set of possibilities with which romance yet thrills; he was the first (so far as I can find) to write a novel for publication in serial form, and herein he has had some forty thousand imitators; finally, he was beloved of the boy Dickens, who remembered and imitated him, and so he takes hands with one of the greatest in English letters. One may like him or not; but one has to admit that he builded better than, with all his full-sailed vanity, he knew, and, at the worst, was full of most excellent differences: that, in so many words, English literature would have been appreciably the poorer, if 'Dr. Toby' had not lived and worked.

An ancestor
of *Pickwick*.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

His descent. HAZLITT'S father, a minister in the Unitarian Church, was the son of an Antrim dissenter, who had removed to Tipperary ; Hazlitt's mother was the daughter of a Cambridgeshire yeoman ; so that there is small room for wonder if Hazlitt were all his life distinguished by a fine pugnaciousness of mind, a fiery courage, an excellent doggedness of temper, and (not to crack the wind of the poor metaphor) a brilliancy in the use of his hands unequalled in his time, and since his time, by any writing Englishman. Of course, he was very much else ; or this monument¹ to his genius would scarce be building, this draft to his credit would have been drawn for To-Morrow on To-Day. But, while he lived, his fighting talent was the sole thing in his various and splendid gift that was evident to the powers that were ; and, inasmuch as he loved nothing so dearly as asserting himself to the disadvantage of certain superstitions which the said powers esteemed the very stuff of life, they did their utmost to dissemble his uncommon merits, and to present him to the world at large as a person whose

His fighting talent.

¹ The monument is the edition published by Mr. Dent (1902-4), to which this Essay served as an introduction.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

morals were deplorable, whose nose was pimpled, whose mind was lewd, whose character would no more bear inspection than his English, whose heart and soul and taste were irremediable, and who, as he persisted in regarding 'the Corsican fiend' as a culmination of human genius and character, must for that reason especially—(but there were many others)—be execrated as a public enemy, and stuck in the pillory whenever, in the black malice of his corrupt and poisonous heart, he sought, by feigning an affection for Shakespeare, or an interest in metaphysics, to recommend his vulgar, mean, pernicious personality to the attention of a loyal, God-fearing, church-going, tax-paying, Pope-and-Pretender-hating British Public. I cannot say that I regret the very scandalous attacks that were made on Hazlitt: since, if they had not been, we should have lacked some admirable pages in the *Political Essays* and *The Spirit of the Age*, nor should we now be privileged to rejoice in the dignified and splendid savagery of the *Letter to William Gifford*. And, if I do not regret them for myself and the many who think with me, still less can I wish them wanting for Hazlitt's sake; for if they had been, who shall say how dull and how profitless, how weary and flat and stale, some years of what he described, in his last words to his kind, as 'a happy life'—how mean and beggarly may not some days in these years have seemed? But there is, after all, a reason for being rather sorry than not that Hazlitt's polemic was so brilliant, his young conviction so unalterably constant, his example so detestable as it seemed to the magnificent ruffian in *Blackwood* and

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The Public
of those days.

the infinitely spiteful underling in *The Quarterly*. The British Public of those days was a good, hard-hitting, hard-drinking, hard-living lot ; and, in the matter of letters, there was no guile in it. It read its Campbell, its Rogers, its Moore, its Hook and Egan and Jon Bee ; it accepted its convinced and pedantic sycophant in Southey, its gay, light-hearted protestant in Leigh Hunt ; it nibbled at its Wordsworth, knew not what to make of its Coleridge, swallowed its Cobbett (that prince of pugilists) as its morning rasher and toast ; it made much of Hone, yet was far from contemptuous of Westmacott ; it laid itself open to its Scott and its Byron, Michael and Satan, the Angel of Acceptance and the Angel of Revolt. Withal it was essentially a Tory Public : a public long practised in fearing God and honouring the King ; with half an ear for Major Cartwright and his like, and a whole mind for the story of Randall and Cribb ; honestly and jovially proud of Nelson and 'The Duke,' but neither loving the Emperor nor seeking to understand him. Now, to Hazlitt the Revolution was humanity *in excelsis*, while the Emperor, being democracy incarnate, and so a complete expression of character and human genius, was as his god. Gifford, then, and Wilson, had small difficulty in blasting Hazlitt's fame, and in so far ruining Hazlitt's chance that 'tis but now, after some seventy years, that he takes his place in literary history as the hero of a Complete Edition. In the meanwhile he has had praise, and praise again. But it has come ever from the few, and he has yet to be considered of the general as a critic of many elements in human activity, a master

WILLIAM HAZLITT

of his mother-tongue, and one, and that one not the least, in an epoch illustrious in the achievement of Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth, the inimitable Cobbett, Byron and Sir Walter, Coleridge, the Arch-Potency (who, 'prone on the flood' of failure, ever 'lies floating many a rood'), and the thrice-beloved Lamb.

I

THE elder Hazlitt was trained in Glasgow. A man of spirit and understanding, an active and a vigilant minister, he married Grace Loftus, the Wisbech yeoman's daughter, in 1766; and in 1778 (he being much older than she), the last of their children, their son William, was born to them at Maidstone. Five years later this son accompanied his parents to Philadelphia. There the elder Hazlitt preached and lectured for some fifteen months; but in 1786-87, having meanwhile established the earliest Unitarian church in America, he returned to England, and settled at Wem, in Shropshire, which was practically Hazlitt's first taste of native earth. A precocious youngster, well grounded by his father, himself a man of parts and reading,¹ he was responsible as early as 1792 for a *New Theory of Criminal and Civil Jurisprudence*, and at fifteen he went to the Unitarian College at Hackney, there to study for the ministry. But his mind changed. In the meantime he learned something of literature, some-

His birth and
childhood.

¹ Hazlitt has glanced at him in his notes on dissenters and dissent in the *Political Essays*, and has given a further taste of him in that very notable and gracious piece, 'My First Acquaintance with Poets.'

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thing of metaphysics, something of painting, something (I doubt not) of life ; the Revolution blazed out, Bonaparte fell falconwise upon Austrian Italy, and approved himself the greatest captain since Marlborough ; there was a strong unrest in time and the destiny of man ; the ambitions of life were changed, the possibilities and conditions of life transformed. The skies thrilled with the dawn of a new day, and Hazlitt : already, it is fair to conjecture, at grips with that potent and implacable devil of sex which possessed him so vigorously for so many years ; already, too, the devout and militant Radical, the fanatic of Bonaparte, he remained till the end : was no longer for the pulpit. And at this moment existence was transfigured for him also. In the January of 1798, Coleridge, that embodied Inspiration, visited the elder Hazlitt at Wem, and preached his last (Unitarian) sermon in the chapel there. He was at his best, his freshest, his most copious, his most expressive and persuasive ; he had the poet's eye, the poet's mouth, the poet's voice, impulse, authority, style ; he had already ' fed on honey-dew, and drunk the milk of Paradise ' ; and he carried Hazlitt clean off his legs. To the sombre, personal, scarce lettered but very thoughtful youth this voluble and affecting Apparition was the bearer of a revelation. He listened to Coleridge as to a John Baptist. He dared to talk metaphysics, and was so far rewarded for his valour as to be encouraged to persevere.¹ What was of

His meeting with Coleridge.

¹ In 1805 he produced his essay on the Principles of Human Action. Being no metaphysician, I have never read this work ; but Mr. Leslie Stephen, who is a very competent person in these matters, I am told, assures me (*D. N. B.*) that

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vastly greater importance, he was asked to Stowey in the spring of the same year : an event from which he dated the true beginnings of his intellectual life.

In that centre of enchantment he stayed three weeks. It was a Golden Year. Hazlitt was drunk ^{A golden year.} throughout with what I should like to call Neophytism. Coleridge was magnificent—elusive, archimagian, irresistible ; Wordsworth was opinionated but sublime ; at intervals, as in Sir Richard Burton's *Thousand Nights and a Night*, they 'repeated the following verses.' It was a time—O, but it was a time! A time of ecstasy : 'When proud-pied April was in all his trim,' and even 'heavy Saturn' must have laughed, if only to keep his yoke-fellow, Wordsworth, in company ; Wordsworth with his thick airs, and his luminous Belt, and his dull but steady-going group of Moons! A time of gold, I say ; yet had it a most strange outcome. In 1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth were Revolutionaries in everything : they looked to France for liberty, for change, for a shining and enduring example. Hazlitt was with them now and here : his also was a revolutionary soul, he also was of a mind with Danton, he also looked to France for leading and light, he also held the assault delivered upon France for an assault against Freedom. But Coleridge and Wordsworth changed their minds, and readjusted their points of view ;

it is 'scrupulously dry,' though 'showing great acuteness.' This, I take leave to say—this is Hazlitt all over. None has written of the workaday elements in life and time with a rarer taste, a finer relish, a stronger confidence in himself and them. Yet, in dealing with absolutes in life and time, he is 'scrupulously dry.' This, I take it, is to be a man of letters.

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and he did not. They loved not Bonaparte ; and he did. And the end of it was that, so far as I know, he never wrote with so ripe and sensual a gust : not even, to my mind, when he was merely annihilating Gifford : as when, long years after Nether-Stowey, he broke in upon the strong, solid Disillusion. hold of Wordsworth's egotism, and tore to tatters—tatters which he flung upon the wind—the old, greasy prophet's mantle,¹ which Coleridge had sported to so little purpose for so many years. To Hazlitt, the dissenter born, the deeply brooding, the inflexible—to Hazlitt, I say, these Twin-Stars of the Romantic movement were common turn-coats ; and he dealt with them on occasion as he thought fit. But he never lost his interest in them ; and when it comes to a comparison between Wordsworth, the renegade, and Byron, the leader of storming-parties, the captain of forlorn-hopes, then is his idiosyncrasy revealed. He hacks and stabs, he jibes and sneers and denies, till there is no Byron left, and the sole poet of the century is the 'gentlemanly creature—reads nothing but his own poetry, I believe,'—whose best passages, in a moment of supreme geniality, he once likened, not to their advantage, to those of 'the classic Akenside.'

II

It was from Nether-Stowey that Hazlitt dated his regard for poetry. But if literature came late to him, as (his father's office and his own metaphysical inklings aiding) it did, he ever cherished a pure and

¹Or rather bedgown : unction-soiled and laudanum-stained.

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ardent passion for it, once it had come. Yet he was by no means widely read, and in his last years seldom finished a new book. First and last, indeed, he was A man of few books. a man of few books and fewer authors. Shakespeare, Burke, Cervantes, Rabelais, Milton, the *Decameron*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and the *Confessions*, Richardson's epics of the parlour and Fielding's epics of the road—these things and their kind he read intensely ; and, when it pleased him to speak of them, it was ever in the terms of understanding and regard. Yet it was long ere he had any thought of writing ; and it was necessity alone that made him a man of letters. In the beginning, the Pulpit proving impossible, he turned to painting for a career, and, after certain studies, presumably under his elder brother John,¹ and possibly under Northcote, he went to the Paris of the First Consul, and painted there for some four months in a Louvre which the thrift of Bonaparte had stored with the choicest plunder in Italian Art. I know not whether or not he could ever have been a painter. A Painter. Haydon, who neither loved nor understood him, and was, besides, a man who could greatly dare and 'toil terribly'—Haydon says that he was at once too lazy and too timid ever to succeed in painting : an art in which, as Haydon showed, and as Millet was presently to say, 'You must flay yourself alive, and give your skin.'² I do not think that Hazlitt was daunted by what may be called the painfulness of painting ; for in letters he was soon enough to

¹ John Hazlitt had been a pupil of Reynolds, and his miniatures were welcome at the Academy.

² Dans l'art il faut donner sa peau.

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prove that he had in him to face a world in arms, and to tincture his writings, if need were, with the best blood of his heart. In any case, after divers essays at copying in the Louvre,¹ and certain attempt at portraiture on his return to England,² he found that he could not excel; that, in fact, he was neither Titian nor Rembrandt, nor could he even be Sir Joshua. So he painted no more, but went on *reading* certain painters: very much, I assume, as he went on taking certain authors; because he loved them for themselves, and found emotions—and not only emotions, but sensations³—in them.

Art criticism. His ideals are Claude, Rembrandt, Raphael, Poussin, Titian; he gives you very gentlemanly and intelligent estimates of Watteau and Velas-

¹ He had a painter in him, whether imperfectly developed or not; for he would condescend upon none but Guido, Raphael, Titian.

² One was a likeness of his father, of which he has written in eloquent and engaging terms; another, a *Wordsworth*, which he destroyed; a third, the picture of Elia, 'as a Venetian senator,' now in the National Portrait Gallery; yet another, the presentment of an Old Woman, which is likened to a Rembrandt. Having seen none of these things, all I can say about them is that Hazlitt seems to have been passionately interested in colour; that he loved a picture because it was a piece of painting; and, if he knew not always bad (or rather third and fourth rate) work when he saw it, was as contemptuous of it, when he realised its status, as Fuseli himself.

³ There is an immense, even an insuperable difference between the two sorts of sensualists. To take an immediate instance: Lamb loved Hogarth, and found emotions in him, because he (Hogarth) was a novelist in paint; while Titian's *Bacchus* and *Ariadne* touched his sense of letters, and, as Mr. Ainger has noted, suggested to him so much literature, or, at all events, so many literary possibilities, that Titian could not but be an arch-painter. Hazlitt felt his painter first, and thought not of the man-of-letters in his painter till his interest in his painter's painting was—I won't say extinguished but—allayed.

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quez; he has an eye—a right one—for Rubens and Van Dyck; he exults in Jan Steen, has words of worth for Ruysdael and Hobbima, and gives Turner as neat a *croc-en-jambe* as you could wish to see. But, despite his training and his gift, he is no more in advance of his age than the best of us here and now. To him the Carraccis and Salvator are *sommités* of a kind; if, so far as I remember, he will have nought to do with Carlo Dolci, he will not do without his Guido; I have read no word of his on Lawrence, no word of his on Constable, none on Morland; on Hogarth he is chiefly literary, on Turner not much more than diabolically ingenious. Wisely or not, he took pictures as he took books: they might be few, but they must be good; and, not only good but, of (as he believed) the best. If they were not, or if they were new, he drew them not to his heart, nor adorned the chambers of his mind with them. Those chambers were filled with good things long since done. To him, then, what were the best things doing? It was his habit to take the good thing on; savour its excellences to their last sucket; meditate it strictly, jealously, privily, longingly; say, if it must be so, a last few words about it—some for the painter, more for the man of letters;¹ and then . . . ? Well, then he accepted the situation. I do not know that he cared much for Keats; I do know that he found Shelley

¹ 'The point in debate,' he says, 'the worth or the bad quality of the painting . . . I am as well able to decide upon as any who ever brandished a palette.' I doubt not that he spoke the truth; yet the residuum of his criticisms of pictures, their after-taste, is mostly literary. And, as he was finally a man of letters, what else could one expect?

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A lover of the
past.

impossible, that he was never an exalted Wordsworthian, and that he hesitated—(ever so little, but he hesitated!)—even at Charles Lamb. Politics and all, in truth, he was a prophet who adored the past, and had but an infidel eye for the promise of the years. He was interested only in the highest achievement ; and to be the highest even that must lie behind him. Thus, Fielding was good, and Rubens ; Sir Joshua was good, and so were Richardson and Smollett ; so, likewise, Shakespeare was good, and Raphael and Titian were good—these with Milton and Rembrandt, and Burke and Rousseau and Boccaccio ; and it was well. Well with them, and well—especially well!—with him : they had achieved, and here was he, the perfect lover, to whom their achievement was as an enchanted garden, a Prospero's Island abounding in romantic and inspiring chances, unending marvels, miracles of vision and solace and pure, perennial delight. And if these, the 'Thrones, Dominations, Powers,' had done their work, and were venerable in it, so also in their degrees and sorts had Congreve and Watteau, Sir Thomas Browne and Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Wycherley and Jordaens ; so had even Salvator and John Bunce. In dealing with painters, and with purely painters' pictures, Hazlitt generally strikes a right note.¹ But the man of letters in him is inevitably first ; and 'tis not insignificant that some of the 'crack passages' in his

¹ Leigh Hunt said that he was the best art critic that ever lived : that to read him was like seeing a picture through stained glass, and so forth. But Leigh Hunt knew not much more about pictures than Coleridge knew about the books he talked of, but had not read.

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writings about pictures are rhapsodies about places—Burleigh or Oxford—or pieces of pure literature like that very human and ingenious essay ‘On the Pleasures of Painting,’ which is one of the best good things in *Table Talk*.

III

So Hazlitt the painter was gathered to his fathers, and in his stead a Hazlitt reigned about whom the world knows little worth the telling: a Hazlitt who abridged philosophers, and made grammars, and compiled anthologies; a married and domesticated Hazlitt; a Hazlitt with a son and heir, and a wife who seems to have cared as little for his works and him as, in the long run, he assuredly cared for her company and her. The lady’s name was Stoddart; she was a brisk, inconsequent, unsexual sort of person—a friend of Mary Lamb; and, like the only Mrs. Pecksniff, ‘she had a small property.’ It was situate at Winterslow, certain miles from Salisbury, and Hazlitt, who loved the neighbourhood, and clung to it till the end, had so far illustrated the name that, if there could ever be a Hazlitt Cult, the place would instantly become a shrine. It was a cottage, within easy walking distance of Wilton and Stonehenge; and in 1812 the Hazlitts, who were made one in 1808, departed it—it and the well-beloved woods of Norman Court—for 19 York Street, Westminster.¹ Hence it was that he issued

¹ The house had been the abode of Milton; for certain months it had harboured the eminent James Mill; it belonged to the celebrated Jeremy Bentham: so that in the matter of

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*The
Morning
Chronicle.*

to deliver his first course of lectures ;¹ and here it was that he entertained those friends he had, made himself a reputation by writing in papers and magazines, drank hard, and cured himself of drinking, and long ere the end came found his wife insufferable. In the beginning he worked in the Reporters' Gallery, where he made notes (in long hand) for *The Morning Chronicle*, and learned to take more liquor than was good for him.² In this same journal he printed some of his best political work, and broke ground as a critic of acting ; and he left it only because he could not help quarrelling with its proprietors.

Journalism
and
Literature.

Another stand-by of his was *The Champion*, to his work in which he owed a not unprofitable connexion with *The Edinburgh* ; yet another, *The Examiner*, to which, with much dramatic criticism, he contributed, at Leigh Hunt's suggestion, the set of essays reprinted as *The Round Table*, and in which he may therefore be said to have discovered his avocation, and given the measure of his best quality. Then, in 1817, he published his *Characters of Shakespeare*, which he dedicated to Charles

associations Hazlitt, a thorough-paced dissenter, was as well off as he could hope to be.

¹ Ten in number : on 'The Rise and Progress of Modern Philosophy,' as illustrated in the works of Hobbes, Locke and his followers, Hartley, Helvétius, and others. The lectures, Mr. Stephen says, were in part a reproduction of the *Principles of Human Action*.

² Haydon says that Waterloo made him drunk for weeks. Then he pulled himself together, and for the rest of his life drank nothing but strong tea. He had, however, no sort of sympathy with those who held the 'social glass' to be Man's safest introduction to the Pit. He only said that liquor did not agree with him, and looked on cheerfully while his friends—Lamb was as close as any—drank as they pleased.

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Lamb ; in 1818 he reprinted a series of lectures (at the Surrey Institute) on the English poets ;¹ in 1819-20 he delivered from the same platform two courses more—on the Comic Writers and the Age of Elizabeth. He wrote for *The Liberal*, *The Yellow Dwarf*, *The London Magazine*—(to which he may very well have introduced the unknown Elia)—*Colburn's New Monthly* ; he returned to the *Chronicle* in 1824 ; in 1825 he published *The Spirit of the Age*, in 1826 *The Plain Speaker*, the *Boswell Redivivus* in 1827 ; and in this last year he set to work, at Winterslow, on a life of Napoleon. That was the beginning of the end. He had no turn for history, nor none for research ; his methods were personal, his results singular and brief ; he was as it were an accidental writer, whose true material was in himself. His health broke, and worsened ; his publishers went bankrupt ; he lost the best part of the £500 which he had hoped to earn by his work ; and though, consulting none but anti-English authorities, he lived to complete a book containing much strong thinking and not a few striking passages, it was a thing foredoomed to failure : a matter in which the nation, still hating its tremendous enemy, and still rejoicing in the man and the battle which had brought him to the ground,

*The Life of
Napoleon.*

¹ Both the *Characters* and the *English Poets* were reviewed by Gifford in the *Quarterly*. The style of these 'reviews' is abject ; the inspiration venal ; the matter the very dirt of the mind. Gifford hated Hazlitt for his politics, and set out to wither Hazlitt's repute as a man of letters. For the tremendous reprisal with which he was visited, the reader is referred to the *Letter to William Gifford, Esq.* If he find it over-savage : probably, being of to-day, he will : let him turn to his *Quarterly*, and consider, if he have the stomach, Gifford and the matter of offence.

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His death. would not, and could not take an interest. Two volumes were published in 1828 (Sir Walter's *Napoleon* appeared in 1827), and two more in 1830; but the work of writing them killed the writer.¹ His digestion, always feeble, was ruined; and in the September of 1830 he died. He was largely, I should say, a sacrifice to tea, which he drank, in vast quantities, of extraordinary strength. However this be, his ending was (as he'd have loved to put it) 'as a Chrissom child's.'²

IV

His candour. Thus much, thus all-too little, of his course in print. For his life, despite his many 'bursts of confidence,' the admissions of his grandson, and the discoveries of such friends as Patmore, the half of it, I think, has to be told to us. This was not his fault, for he was in no sense secretive: he would no more lie about himself than he would lie about Southey or Gifford. His trick of drinking was, while it lasted, public; he proclaimed with all his lungs his frank and full approval of the fundamentals of the Revolution and his preference of Bonaparte before all the

¹ He lived to rejoice in the Revolution of July; but of the great movement in the arts—of *Henri Trois et sa Cour* and *Hernani*, of Delacroix and Barye, of Géricault and Bonington and de Vigny, and the rest of its heroes—he seems to have known nothing. That was his way. The new did not exist for him. A dissenter by birth and conviction, he yet cared only for the past, and the elder 'glories of our blood and state' were to him, not shadow but, the sole substantial things he could keep room for in the kingdom of his mind.

² 'Tis a pleasure to remember that Lamb was with him to the end—was in his death-chamber in the very article of mortality. We have all read Carlyle on Lamb. The everlasting pity is that we shall never read Hazlitt on Carlyle.

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Kings in Europe ; he despised Shelley the politician, and rejected Shelley the poet, and he cherished and made the most he could of his resentment against Coleridge and Wordsworth, though his disdain for concealment perilled his friendship with Lamb, and well nigh cost him the far more facile regard of Leigh Hunt ; while, as for Byron, he so bitterly resented the 'noble Lord's' pre-eminency that he made no difference, strongly as he contemned the Laureate, between the Laureate's *Vision of Judgment*, a piece of English verse immortal by the sheer force of its absurdity, and that other *Vision of Judgment*, which is one of the great things in English poetry. 'Twas much the same in life. Poor Mrs. Hazlitt, though she was well-read, of no account as an housekeeper, 'fond of incongruous finery,' and capable of child-bearing withal, was, one may take for granted, not distinguished as a woman. Now, her husband, thinker as he approved himself, was very much of a male. Who runs may read of his early loves—Miss Railton and the rest ; 'tis history—at any rate 'tis history according to Wordsworth¹—that once, in Lakeland, he so dealt with the local beauty that he came very near to tasting of the local pond ; when Patmore walked home with him to Westminster, after his first lecture in the Surrey Institute, the wayside nymphs flocked to his encounter, and—(so Patmore says)—he knew them all ;² he has himself recorded the confession

¹ Him Shelley calls 'a solemn and unsexual man.'

² Much as years afterwards, according to a certain Nicolardot, the expertest of their kind were 'on the list' of old Ste.-Beuve.

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that in the matter of mob-caps and black stockings and red elbows—in fact, on the score of your maid-servant—he could flourish a list as long, or thereabouts, as Leporello's. I know not whether he lied or spoke the truth ;¹ but I can scarce believe that he lied. I should rather opine that on this point, as on others, Hazlitt, a gross and extravagant admirer (be it remembered) of J.-J. Rousseau, was, and is, entirely credible. We may take it that his veracity is beyond reproach. But 'tis another matter with his taste ; and for that I can say no more than that I have listened to so many confidences :

From some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time has pressed :

that I hold it for merely unessential.

Sarah Walker. But the man who habitually hugs his housemaid is, whether he boast of it or not, no more superior to consequences than another : especially if he have, as Hazlitt had, an ardent imagination and a teeming waste of sentiment. And so Hazlitt found. About 1819 he ceased from consorting with his wife ; and in 1820 he lodged with a tailor, one Walker, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. Walker, a most respectable man, had daughters, and one of these, a girl well broken-in, it would seem, to the ways of 'gentlemen'—a girl with a dull eye, a 'sinuous gait,' and a habit of sitting on the knees of 'gentlemen' ; a girl, in fine, who is only to be described by an old and sane and homely

¹ His grandson describes him as 'physically incapable' of any but a transient fidelity to anybody.

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but unquotable designation—this poor half-harlot took on our Don Juan of the area, and brought him to utter grief. He looked at passion, as embodied in Sarah Walker, until it grew to be the world to him ; he went about like a man drunken and dazed, telling the story of his slighted love to anybody that would listen to it ;¹ now he raved and was rampant, now was he soul-stricken and heart-broken ; he swore he'd marry Walker whether she would or not, and to this end he persuaded his wife to follow him to Edinburgh, and there divorce him—*pour cause*, as the lady and her legal adviser had every reason to believe ;² and having achieved a divorce, which was no divorce in law, and been finally refused by the young woman in Southampton Buildings, he set to work assiduously to coin his madness into drachmas, and wrote, always with Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his eye, the *Liber Amoris*. It is a book by no means *Liber Amoris*. bad—if you can at all away with it. Indeed, it is unique in English, and the hundred guineas Hazlitt got for it were uncommonly well earned. But to away with it at all—that is the difficulty ; and, as it varies with the temperaments of them that read the book, I shall discourse no more of it, but content myself with noting that, in writing the *Liber*

¹ He confessed that one day he told it half a dozen times or so to persons he had never seen before : once, twice over to the same listener.

² It cost Hazlitt a crown, perhaps less ; and he arranged—apparently with Mrs. Hazlitt—to be taken in the act ! After this the knowledge that Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt took tea together, *pendente lite*, and that then and after his second espousals Hazlitt supplied this very reasonable woman with money, astonishes no more, but comes as a kind of anticlimax.

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Amoris, Hazlitt wrote off Sarah Walker.¹ He had been in love with a housemaid, but he had been very much more in love with his love; and, having wearied all he knew with descriptions of his feelings, he wrote those feelings down, cleared his system, and became himself again. 'Twas Goethe's way, I believe—his and many another's; the world will scarce get disaccustomed to it while there are women and writing men. What distinguishes Hazlitt from a whole wilderness of self-chroniclers is the fulness of his revelation. It is extraordinary; but, even so, Rousseau had shown him the way. And perhaps the simple truth about the *Liber* is that it is the best Rousseau—the best and the nearest to the *Confessions*—done since Rousseau died.

His second marriage. Sarah Hazlitt married no more; but her husband did. In 1824 he took to wife a certain Mrs. Bridgewater. She was Scots by birth, had lived much abroad, had married and buried a Colonel Bridgewater, was of excellent repute, and had about £300 a year; and with her new husband and his son by Sarah Stoddart—who had an idea that his mother had been wronged, and seems to have been a most uncomfortable travelling companion—she toured it awhile in France and Italy. On the return journey the Hazlitts left her in Paris; and when the elder, writing from London, asked her when she purposed to come home to him, she replied that she did not purpose to come home to him: that, in fact, she had done with him, and he would see her no

¹ That damsel presently married in her station. She seems to have been a decent woman according to her lights, and to have lived up honestly to her ideals, such as they were.

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more. So far as I know, he never did ; so that, as his grandson says, this second marriage was but 'an episode.' Apparently it was the last in his life ; for neither Mrs. Hazlitt attended him in his mortal illness, nor was there any woman at his bed's head when he passed.

V

IT is told of him that he was dark-eyed and dark-haired, slim in figure, rather slovenly in his habit ; that he valued himself on his effect in evening dress ; that his manners were rather ceremonious than easy ; that he had a wonderfully eloquent face, with a mouth as expressive as Kean's, and a frown like the Giaour's own¹—that Giaour whom he did not love. He worshipped women, but was awkward and afraid with them ; he played a good game of fives, and would walk his forty to fifty miles a day ; he would lie abed till two in the afternoon, then rise, dally with his breakfast until eight without ever moving from his tea-pot and his chair, and go to a theatre, a bite at the Southampton, and talk till two in the morning.² That he excelled in talk is beyond all doubt. Witness after witness is here to his wit, his insight, his grip on essentials, his

His aspect
and
character.

¹ There was a laughing devil in his sneer
That raised emotions both of rage and fear ;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope, withering, fled—and Mercy sighed farewell.

² These details are Patmore's, and, even if they be true, are not the whole truth. Hazlitt loved solitude and the country, had to write for a living, wrote with difficulty, and left no inconsiderable body of work.

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beautiful trick of paradox, his brilliancy in attack, his desperate defence, his varying, far-glancing, inextinguishable capacity for expression. And he was himself—Hazlitt: a man who borrowed nobody's methods, set no limits to the field of discussion, nor made other men wonder if this were no talk but a lecture. He bore no likeness to that 'great but useless genius,' Coleridge: who, beginning well as few begin, lived ever after 'on the sound of his own voice'; none to Wordsworth, whose most inspiring theme was his own poetry; none to Sheridan, who 'never oped his mouth but out there flew' a jest; none to Lamb, who—

Lamb and
Hazlitt. But no; I cannot imagine Lamb in talk. Hazlitt himself has plucked out only a tag or two of Lamb's mystery; and I own that, even in the presence of the notes in which he sets down Lamb as Lamb was to his intimates, I am divided in appreciation between the pair. Lamb for the unexpected, the incongruous, the profound, the jest that bred seriousness, the pun that was that and a light upon dark places, a touch of the dread, the all-disclosing Selene, besides; Hazlitt for none of these but for himself; and what that was I have tried to show. Well; Lamb, Coleridge, Sheridan, Hazlitt, Hunt, Wordsworth—all are dead, tall men of their tongues as they were. And dead is Burke, and Fox is dead, and Byron, most quizzical of lords! And of them all there is nothing left but their published work; and of those that have told us most about some of them, 'in their habit as they lived,' the best and the strictest-seeing, the most eloquent and the most persuasive, is assuredly Hazlitt. And, being some-

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thing of an expert in talk,¹ I think that, if I could break the grave and call the great ghosts back to earth for a spell of their mortal fury, I would begin and end with Lamb and Hazlitt : Lamb as he always was ; ² Hazlitt in one of his high and mighty moods, sweeping life, and letters, and the art of painting, and the nature of man, and the curious case of woman (especially the curious case of woman!) into a rapture of give-and-take, a night-long series of achievements in consummate speech.

VI

MANY men, as Coleridge, have written well, and yet talked better than they wrote. I have named Coleridge, though his talk, prodigious as it was, in the long run ended in 'Om-m-mject' and 'Sum-m-mject,' and though, some enchanting and undying verses apart, his writing, save when it is merely critical, is nowadays of small account. But, in truth, I have in my mind, rather, two friends, Two friends. both dead, of whom one, an artist in letters, lived to conquer the English-speaking world, while the second, who should, I think, have been the greater writer, addicted himself to another art, took to

¹ What I mean is, that I have heard the best, as I believe, the last of the old century and the first of the new have shown.

² 'He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. His serious conversation, like his serious writing, is his best. No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears : and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hare-brained vein of home-felt truth ! What choice venom !'

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letters late in life, and, having the largest and the most liberal utterance I have known, was constrained by the very process of composition so to produce himself that scarce a touch of his delightful, apprehensive, all-expressing spirit appeared upon his page. I take these two cases because both are excessive. In the one you had both speech and writing ; in the other you found a rarer brain, a more fanciful and daring humour, a richer gusto, perhaps a wider knowledge, in any event a wider charity. And at one point the two met, and that point was talk. Therein each was pre-eminent, each irresistible, each a master after his kind, each endowed with a full measure of those gifts that qualify the talker's temperament : as voice and eye and laugh, look and gesture, humour and fantasy, audacity and agility of mind, a lively and most impudent invention, a copious vocabulary, a right gift of foolery, a just, inevitable sense of conversational right and wrong. Well ; one wrote like an angel, the other like poor Poll ; and both so far excelled in talk that I can take it on me to say that they who know them only in print scarce know them at all. 'Twas thus, I imagine, with Hazlitt. He wrote the best he could ; but I see many reasons to believe that he was very much more brilliant and convincing at the Southampton than he is in the most convincing and the most brilliant of his Essays. He was a full man ; he had all the talker's gifts ; he exulted in all kinds of oral opportunities ; what more is there to say ? Sure 'tis the case of all that are born to talk as well as write. They live their best in talk, and what they write is but a sop

Hazlitt a
talker.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

for posterity : a last dying speech and confession (as it were) to show that not for nothing were they held rare fellows in their day.

This is not to say that Hazlitt was not an admirable man of letters. His theories were many, for he was a reality among men, and so had many interests, and there was none on which he did not write forcibly, luminously, arrestingly. He had the true sense of his material, and used the English language as a painter his pigments, as a musician the varying and abounding tonalities that constitute a symphonic scheme. His were a beautiful and choice vocabulary, an excellent ear for cadence, a notable gift of expression. In fact, when Stevenson was pleased to declare that ‘we are mighty fine fellows, but we cannot write like William Hazlitt,’ he said no more than the truth. Whether or not we are mighty fine fellows is a Great Perhaps ; but that none of us, from Stevenson down, can as writers come near to Hazlitt—this, to me, is merely indubitable. To note that he now and then writes blank verse is to note that he sometimes writes impassioned prose ;¹ he misquoted habitually ; he was a good hater, and could be monstrous unfair ; he was given to thinking twice, and his second

His style
and
vocabulary.

¹ It filled the valley like a mist,
And still poured out its endless chant,
And still it swells upon the ear,
And wraps me in a golden trance,
Drowning the noisy tumult of the world.

Like sweetest warblings from a sacred grove . . .
Contending with the wild winds as they roar . . .
And the proud places of the insolent
And the oppressor fell . . .
Such and so little is the mind of Man !

ESSAYS

His
criticism.

Politics and
Art.

thoughts were not always better than his first; he repeated himself as seemed good to him. But in the criticism of politics, the criticism of letters, the criticism of acting, the criticism and expression of life,¹ there is none like him. His politics are not mine; I think he is ridiculously mistaken when he contrasts the Wordsworth of the best things in *The Excursion* with the 'classic Akenside'; his *Byron* is the merest petulance; his *Burke* (when he is in a bad temper with Burke), his *Fox*, his *Pitt*, his *Bonaparte*—these are impossible. Also I never talk art or life with him but I disagree. But I

¹ His summary of the fight between Hickman and Bill Neate is alone in literature, as also in the annals of the Ring. Jon Bee was an intelligent creature of his kind, and knew a very great deal more about pugilism than Hazlitt knew; but to contrast the two is to learn much. Badcock (which is Jon Bee) had seen (and worshipped) Jem Belcher, and had reported fights with an extreme contempt for Pierce Egan, the illiterate ass who gave us *Boriana*. Hazlitt, however, looked on at the proceedings of Neate and the Gaslight Man exactly as he had looked on at divers creations of Edmund Kean. He saw the essentials in both expressions of human activity, and his treatment of both is fundamentally the same. In both he ignores the trivial: here the acting (in its lowest sense), there the hits that did not count. And thus, as he gives you only the vital touches, you know how and why Neate beat Hickman, and can tell the exact moment at which Hickman began to be a beaten man. 'Tis the same with his panegyric on Cavanagh, the fives-player. For a blend of gusto with understanding I know but one thing to equal with this: the note on Dr. Grace, which appeared in *The National Observer*; and the night that that was written, I sent the writer back to Hazlitt's *Cavanagh*, and said to him —! On the whole the *Dr. Grace* is the better of the two. But it has scarce the incorruptible fatness of the *Cavanagh*. Gusto, though, is Hazlitt's special attribute: he glories in what he likes, what he reads, what he feels, what he writes. He triumphed in his Kean, his Shakespeare, his Bill Neate, his Rousseau, his coffee-and-cream and *Love for Love* in the inn-parlour at Alton. He relished things; and expressed them with a relish. That is his 'note.' Some others have relished only the consummate expression of nothing.

WILLIAM HAZLITT

go on reading him, all the same ; and I find that technically and spiritually I am always the better for the bout. Where outside Boswell is there better talk than in Hazlitt's *Boswell Redivivus*—his so-called *Conversations with Northcote*? And his *Age of Elizabeth*, and his *Comic Writers*, and his *Spirit of the Age*—where else to look for such a feeling for differences, such a sense of literature, such an instant, such a masterful, whole-hearted interest in the marking and distinguishing qualities of writers? And *The Plain Speaker*—is it not at least as good reading as (say) *Virginibus Puerisque* and the discourings of the late imperishable Mr. Pater! His *Political Essays* is readable after—how many years? His notes on Kean and the Siddons are as novel and convincing as when they were penned. In truth, he is ever a solace and a refreshment. As a critic of letters he lacks the intense, immortalising vision, even as he lacks, in places, the illuminating and inevitable style of Lamb. But if he be less savoury, he is also more solid, and he gives you phrases, conclusions, splendours of insight and expression, high-piled and golden essays in appreciation : as the *Wordsworth* and the *Coleridge* of the *Political Essays*, the character of Hamlet, the note on Shakespeare's style, the *Horne Tooke*, the *Cervantes*, the *Rousseau*, the *Sir Thomas Browne*, the *Cobbett* : that must ever be rated high among the possessions of the English mind.

As a writer, therefore, it is with Lamb that I would bracket him : they are dissimilar, but they go gallantly and naturally together—*par nobile*

*Par nobile
fratrum.*

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fratrum.¹ Give us these two, with some ripe Cobbett, a volume of Southey, some Wordsworth, certain pages of Shelley, a great deal of the Byron who wrote letters, and we get the right prose of the time. The best of it all, perhaps, is the best of Lamb. But Hazlitt's, for different qualities, is so imminent and shining a second that I hesitate as to the pre-eminency. Probably the race is Lamb's. But Hazlitt is ever Hazlitt; and at his highest moments Hazlitt is hard to beat, and has not these many years been beaten.

¹ Listen, else, to Lamb himself: 'Protesting against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long, and relished so deeply; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes, I should belie my own conscience if I said less than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire; and I think I shall go to my grave without finding or expecting to find such another companion.' Thus does one Royalty celebrate the kingship and enrich the immortality of another.

ROBERT BURNS

(1759-1796)

IN 1759 the Kirk of Scotland, though a less potent and offensive tyranny than it had been in the good old times, was still a tyranny, and was still offensive and still potent enough to make life miserable, to warp the characters of men and women, and to turn the tempers and affections of many from the kindly, natural way. True it is that Hutcheson (1694-1746) had for some years taught, and taught with such authority as an University chair can give, a set of doctrines in absolute antagonism with the principles on which the Kirk of Scotland's rule was based, and with the ambitions which the majority in the Kirk of Scotland held in view. But these doctrines, sane and invigorating as they were, had not reached the general ; and in all departments of life among the general the Kirk of Scotland was a paramount influence, and, despite the intrusion of some generous intelligences, was largely occupied with the work of narrowing the minds, perverting

The Kirk of
Scotland.

NOTE.—The references throughout this Essay are to *The Poetry of Robert Burns*, edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson. In Four Volumes. Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack. 1897.

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the instincts, and constraining the spiritual and social liberties of its subjects. In 1759, however, there was secreted the certainty of a revulsion against its ascendancy; for that year saw the birth of the most popular poet, and the most anti-clerical withal, that Scotland ever bred. He came of the people on both sides; he had a high courage, a proud heart, a daring mind, a matchless gift of speech, an abundance of humour and wit and fire; he was a poet in whom were quint-essentialised the elements of the Vernacular Genius, in whose work the effects and the traditions of the Vernacular School, which had struggled back into being in the Kirk's despite, were repeated with surpassing brilliancy; and in the matter of the Kirk he did for the people a piece of service equal and similar to that which was done on other lines and in other spheres by Hutcheson and Hume and Adam Smith. He was apostle and avenger as well as maker. He did more than give Scotland songs to sing and rhymes to read: he showed that laughter and the joy of life need be no crimes, and that freedom of thought and sentiment and action is within the reach of him that will stretch forth his hand to take it. He pushed his demonstration to extremes; often his teaching has been grossly misread and misapprehended; no doubt, too, he died of his effort—and himself. But most men do as they must—not as they will. It was Burns's destiny, as it was Byron's in his turn, to be 'the passionate and dauntless soldier of a forlorn hope'; and if he fell in mid-assault, he found, despite the circumstances of his passing, the best death man can find. He had

The Poet's
birth.

His gift to
the people.

ROBERT BURNS

faults and failings not a few. But he was ever a leader among men ; and if the manner of his leading were not seldom reckless, and he did some mischief, and gave the Fool a great deal of what passes for good Scripture for his folly, it will be found in the long-run that he led for truth—the truth which ‘maketh free’ ; so that the Scotland he loved so well, and took such pride in honouring, could scarce have been the Scotland she is, had he not been.

I

HIS father, William Burness (or Burnes), and his mother, Agnes Brown, came both of yeoman stock : native the one to Kincardineshire, the other to Ayrshire. William Burness began life as a gardener, and was plying his trade in the service of one Fergusson, the then Provost of Ayr, when, with a view to setting up for himself, he took a lease of seven acres in the parish of Alloway, with his own hands built a two-roomed clay cottage—(still standing, but in use as a Burns Museum),—and in the December of 1757 married Agnes Brown, his junior by eleven years. She was red-haired, dark-eyed, square-browed, well-made, and quick-tempered. He was swarthy and thin ; a man of strong sense, a very serious mind, the most vigilant affections,¹ and a piety not even the Calvinism in

¹ In times of storm, he would seek out and stay with his daughter, where she was herding in the fields, because he knew that she was afraid of lightning ; or, when it was fair, to teach her the names of plants and flowers. He wrote a little theological treatise for his children’s guidance, too, and was,

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which he had been reared could ever make brooding and inhumane. And in the clay cottage to which he had taken his new-married wife, Robert, the first of seven children, was born to them on the 25th January 1759.

The Scots
peasant.

The Scots peasant lived hard, toiled incessantly, and fed so cheaply that even on high days and holidays his diet (as set forth in *The Blithesome Bridal*) consisted largely in preparations of meal and vegetables and what is technically known as 'offal.' But the Scots peasant was a creature of the Kirk; the noblest ambition of Knox¹ was an active influence in the Kirk; and the Parish Schools enabled the Kirk to provide its creatures with such teaching as it deemed desirable. William Burness was 'a very poor man' (R. B.). But he had the right tradition; he was a thinker and an observer; he read whatever he could get to read; he wrote

it is plain, an exemplary father, and so complete a husband that there is record of but a single unpleasantness between him and Agnes his wife.

¹ The Reformer had a vast deal more in common with Burns than with the 'sour John Knox' of Browning's ridiculous verses. He was the man of a crisis, and a desperate one; and he played his part in it like the stark and fearless opposite that he was. But he was a humourist, he loved his glass of wine, he abounded in humanity and intelligence, he married two wives, he was as well beloved as he was extremely hated and feared. He could not foresee what the collective stupidity of posterity would make of his teaching and example, nor how the theocracy at whose establishment he aimed would presently assert itself as largely a system of parochial inquisitions. The minister's man who had looked through *his* keyhole would have got short shrift from *him*; and in the Eighteenth Century he had as certainly stood with Burns against the Kirk of Scotland, as represented by Auld and Russell and the like, as in the Sixteenth he stood with Moray and the nobles against the Church of Rome, as figured in David Beaton and the 'twa infernal monstiris, Pride and Avarice.'

ROBERT BURNS

English formally but with clarity ;¹ and he did the very best he could for his children in the matter of education. Robert went to school at six ;² and in the May of the same year (1765) a lad of eighteen, one John Murdoch, was 'engaged by Mr. Burness and four of his neighbours to teach, and accordingly began to teach, the little school at Alloway' ; his 'five employers' undertaking to board him 'by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year,' in the event of his 'quarterly payments' not amounting to a specified sum. He was an intelligent pedagogue—(he had William Burness behind him)—especially in the matter of grammar and rhetoric ; he trained his scholars to a full sense of the meaning and the value of words ; he even made them 'turn verse into its natural prose order,' and 'substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words and . . . supply all the ellipses.'³ One of his school-books was the Bible, another Masson's *Collection of Prose and Verse*, excerpted from

Burns's
education.

¹ See the aforesaid treatise : ' *A Manual of Religious Belief, in a Dialogue between Father and Son*, compiled by William Burnes, farmer at Mount Oliphant, and transcribed, with grammatical corrections, by John Murdoch, teacher.'

² 'I was a good deal noted at these years,' says the *Letter to Moore*, 'for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot-piety. . . . In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition,' who had, 'I suppose, the largest collection in the county of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, death-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy,' etc.

³ As Robert Louis Stevenson has remarked (*Some Aspects of Robert Burns*) :—'We are surprised at the prose style of Robert ; that of Gilbert need surprise us no less.'

ESSAYS

Murdoch
the Peda-
gogue.

Addison¹ and Steele and Dryden, from Thomson and Shenstone, Mallet and Henry Mackenzie, with Gray's *Elegy*, scraps from Hume and Robertson, and scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. And one effect of his method was that Robert, according to himself, 'was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and participles,' and, according to Gilbert, 'soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement.' It is very characteristic of Murdoch that when, his school being broken up, he came to take leave of William Burness at Mount Oliphant, 'he brought us,' Gilbert says, 'a present and memorial of him, a small English grammar and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*,' and that 'by way of passing the evening' he 'began to read the play aloud.' Not less characteristic of all concerned was the effect of his reading. His hearers melted into tears at the tale of Lavinia's woes, and, 'in an agony of distress,' implored him to read no more. Ever sensible and practical, William Burness remarked that, as nobody wanted to hear the play, Murdoch need not leave it.

¹ 'The earliest thing of composition I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's beginning, "How are thy servants blessed, O Lord"' (R. B., *Letter to Moore*). 'The first two books,' he adds, 'I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read again, were the *Life of Hannibal* and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting-drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough that I might be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins which will boil along there (*sic*) till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest.'

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Robert, ever a sentimentalist and ever an indifferent Shakespearean,¹—‘Robert replied that, if it was left, he would burn it.’ And Murdoch, ever the literary guide, philosopher, and friend, was so much affected by his pupil’s ‘sensibility,’ that ‘he left *The School for Love* (translated, I think, from the French)’ in Shakespeare’s place.²

At this time Burns had but some two and a half years of Murdoch. William Burness liked and believed in the young fellow; for when, still urged by the desire to better his children’s chance, he turned from gardening to cultivation on a larger

¹ If we may judge him from his extant work. Cf. the absurd line:—

‘Here Douglas forms wild Shakespeare into plan.’

He cribs but once from Shakespeare, and the happiest among his few quotations is prefixed to one of the most felicitous—and therefore the least publishable—of his tributes to the Light-heeled Muse. ‘Sing me a bawdy song,’ he says with Sir John Falstaff, ‘to make us merry.’ And he adds this note, in which he is Shakespearean once again:—‘There is—there must be some truth in original sin. My violent propensity to b—dy convinces me of it. Lack a day! If that species of composition be the special sin never-to-be-forgotten in this world nor in that which is to come, then I am the most offending soul alive. Mair for token,’ etc. (R. B. to Cleghorn, 25th October 1793).

² There is no trace of any *School of Love*. It is therefore probable that what Gilbert meant was *The School for Lovers*: ‘A Comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. By William Whitehead, Esq.; Poet Laureat. London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-Mall; and sold by J. Hinxman, in Pater-noster-row. MDCCCLXII.’ The first sentence of the author’s *Advertisement* runs thus:—‘The following Comedy is formed on a plan of Monsieur de Fontenelle’s, never intended for the stage, and printed in the eighth volume of his works, under the title of *Le Testament*.’ The names of the chief ‘persons represented’ are Sir John Dorilant, Modely, Belmour, Lady Beverley, Cælia, and Araminta: an unlikely lot, one would say, for an Ayrshire farmstead, even though it sheltered the youthful Burns.

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scale, and took, at a £40 rental, the farm of Mount Oliphant, his two sons went on with Murdoch at Alloway, some two miles off. The school once broken up, however, Robert and his brother fell into their father's hands, and, for divers reasons, Gilbert says, 'we rarely saw any body but the members of our own family,' so that 'my father was for some time the only companion we had.' It will scarce be argued now that this sole companionship was wholly good for a couple of lively boys; but it is beyond question that it was rather good than bad. For, 'he conversed on all subjects with us familiarly, as if we had been men,' and, further, 'was at great pains, as we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge or confirm our virtuous habits.' Also, he got his charges books—a *Geographical Grammar*, a *Physico and Astro-Theology*, Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*; and these books Robert read 'with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled.'¹ 'None,' says Gilbert,

Burns's
books.

¹ Robert's list (*Letter to Moore*) includes Guthrie and Salmon's *Geographical Grammar*; *The Spectator*; Pope; 'some plays of Shakespear' (acting editions? or odd volumes?); 'Tull and Dickson on Agriculture'; *The Pantheon*; Locke *On the Human Understanding*; Stackhouse; with 'Justice's *British Gardener*, Boyle's *Lectures*, Allan Ramsay's *Works*, Dr. Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, *A Select Collection of English Songs*, and Harvey's *Meditations*.' Later he knew Thomson, Shenstone, Beattie, Goldsmith, Gray, Fergusson, Spenser even: with *The Tea-Table Miscellany* and many another song-book, Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Bunyan, Boston (*The Fourfold State*), Shakespeare, John Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible*, and *The Wealth of Nations*, which last he is found reading (at Ellisland) with a sense of wonder that so much

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'was so voluminous as to slacken his industry or so antiquated as to damp his research': with the result that he wasn't very far on in his 'teens ere he had 'a competent knowledge of ancient history,' with 'something of geography, astronomy and natural history.' Then, owing to the mistake of an uncle, who went to Ayr to buy a *Ready Reckoner* or *Tradesman's Sure Guide*, together with a *Complete Letter-Writer*, but came back with 'a collection of letters by the most eminent writers,' he was moved by 'a strong desire to excel in letter-writing.' At thirteen or fourteen he was sent ('week about' with Gilbert) to Dalrymple Parish School to better his handwriting; 'about this time' he fell in with *Pamela*, Fielding, Hume, Robertson, and the best of Smollett; and 'about this time' Murdoch set up as a schoolmaster in Ayr, and 'sent us Pope's *Works* and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in the *English Collection* and in the volume of the *Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772.'¹ The summer

At
Dalrymple
School.

wit should be contained between the boards of a single book. One favourite novel was *Tristram Shandy*; another, the once renowned, now utterly forgotten *Man of Feeling*. At Ellisland, again, he is found ordering the works of divers dramatists—as Jonson, Wycherley, Molière—with a view to reading and writing for the stage. But you find no trace of them in his work; nor is there any evidence to show that he could ever have written a decent play, though there is plenty of proof that he could *not*. No doubt, *The Jolly Beggars* will be quoted against me here. But the essential interests of that masterpiece are character and description. Now, there go many more things to the making of a play than character, while, as for description, the less a play contains of that the better for the play.

¹ The *English Collection* I take to be Masson's aforesaid. At all events I can find no other. So far as verse is concerned, another exception was found in 'those *Excellent new Songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets or spread

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after the writing-lessons at Dalrymple, Robert spent three weeks with Murdoch at Ayr, one over the English Grammar, the others over the rudiments of French. The latter language he was presently able to read,¹ for the reason that Murdoch would go over to Mount Oliphant on half-holidays, partly for Robert's sake and partly for the pleasure of talking with Robert's father. Thus was Robert schooled; and 'tis plain that in one, and that an essential particular, he and his brother were exceptionally fortunate in their father and in the means he took to train them.²

In another respect—one of eminent importance—their luck was nothing like so good. Mount Oliphant was made up of 'the poorest land in Ayrshire'; William Burness had started it on a borrowed hundred; he was soon in straits; only by unremitting diligence and the strictest economy could he hope to make ends meet; and the burden

on stalls in the streets' (G. B.). They were probably as interesting to Robert as Pope's *Works* or the poetry in *The Edinburgh Magazine*. At any rate, his first essays in song were imitated from them, and he had the trick of them, when he listed, all his life long.

¹ Currie saw his Molière at Dumfries. There is no question but he would have got on excellent well with Argan and Jourdain and Pourceaugnac; but could he have found much to interest him in Arnolphe and Agnès, in Philinte and Alceste and Célimène? I doubt it. On the other hand, he would certainly have loved the *flon-flons* which Collé wrote for the Regent's private theatre; and I have always regretted that he read (1789) to no better purpose the *La Fontaine of the Contes*: a Scots parallel to which he was exactly fitted to achieve.

² Robert mastered, besides, the first six books of Euclid, and even dabbled a little in Latin now and then: reverting to his 'Rudiments' (says Gilbert) when he was crossed in love, or had tiffed with his sweetheart.

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of hard work lay heavy on the whole family—^{Poverty and work.} heavier, as I think, on the growing lads than on the made man and woman. ‘For several years,’ says Gilbert, ‘butcher’s meat was a stranger to the house.’ Robert was his father’s chief hand at fifteen—‘for we kept no hired servant’—and could afterwards describe his life at this time as a combination of ‘the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave.’ The mental wear was not less than the physical strain: for William Burness grew old and broken, and his family was seven strong, and of money there was as little as there seemed of hope. The wonder is, not that Robert afterwards broke *out* but, that Robert did not then break *down*: that he escaped with a lifelong tendency to vapours and melancholia, and at the time of trial itself with that ‘dull headache’ of an evening, which ‘at a future period . . . was exchanged,’ says Gilbert, ‘for a palpitation of the heart and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.’ William Burness is indeed a pathetic figure; but to me the Robert of Mount Oliphant is a figure more pathetic still. Acquired or not, stoicism was habitual with the father. With the son it was not so much as acquired; for in that son was latent a world of appetites and forces and potentialities the reverse of stoical. And, even had this not been: if Robert hadn’t proved a man of genius, with the temperament which genius sometimes entails: he must still have been the worse for the experience. He lived in circumstances of unwonted harshness and bitterness for a lad of his degree; with a long misery of ^{A harsh and bitter life.}

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anticipation, he must endure a quite unnatural strain on forming muscle and on nerves and a brain yet immature ; he had perforce to face the necessity of diverting an absolute example of the artistic temperament to laborious and squalid ends, and to assist in the repression of all those natural instincts—of sport and reverie and companionship—the fostering of which is for most boys, have they genius or have they not, an essential process of development ; and the experience left him with stooping shoulders and a heavy gait, an ineradicable streak of sentimentalism, what he himself calls ‘ the horrors of a diseased nervous system,’ and that very practical exultation in the *joie de vivre*, once it was known, which, while it is brilliantly expressed in much published and unpublished verse and prose, is nowhere, perhaps, so naïvely signified as in a pleasant parenthesis addressed, years after Mount Oliphant, to the highly respectable Thomson :— ‘ Nothing (*since a Highland wench in the Cowgate once bore me three bastards at a birth*) has surprised me more than,’ *etc.* The rest is not to my purpose : which is to argue that, given Robert Burns and the apprenticeship at Mount Oliphant, a violent reaction was inevitable, and that one’s admiration for him is largely increased by the reflection that it came no sooner than it did. William Burness knew that it must come ; for, as he lay dying, he confessed that it troubled him to think of Robert’s future. This, to be sure, was not at Mount Oliphant : when Robert had done no worse than insist on going to a dancing-school : but years after, at Lochlie, when Robert had begun to assert himself. True it is

Inevitable
reaction.

ROBERT BURNS

that at Kirkoswald—a smuggling village, whither he went, at seventeen, to study mensuration, ‘dialling,’ and the like—he had learned, he says, ‘to look unconcernedly on a large tavern bill and mix without fear in a drunken squabble.’ True it is, too, that at Lochlie the visible reaction had set in. But, so far as is known, that reaction was merely formal ; and one may safely conjecture that, as boys are not in the habit of telling their fathers everything, William Burness knew little or nothing of those gallant hours at Kirkoswald. For all this, though, he seems to have discerned, however dimly and vaguely, some features of the prodigious creature he had helped into the world ; and that he should not have discerned them till thus late is of itself enough to show how stern and how effectual a discipline Mount Oliphant had proved.

II

THE Mount Oliphant period lasted some twelve years, and was at its hardest for some time ere it reached its term. ‘About 1775 my father’s generous master died,’¹ says Robert ; and ‘to clench the curse we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture² I have drawn of one in my tale of

¹ This was that Fergusson (of Ayr) in whose service William Burness had been at the time of his marriage with Agnes Brown, and (apparently) for some years after it—in fact, till he took on Mount Oliphant. This he did on a hundred pounds borrowed from his old employer ; and one may conjecture that the legal proceedings which Robert thus resented were entailed upon Fergusson’s agents by the work of winding up the estate.

² ‘Sat for the picture I have drawn of one’ is precise and

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"Twa Dogs." . . . My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these *we retrenched expenses*'—to the purpose and with the effect denoted! Then came

Easier times.

easier times. In 1777 William Burness removed his family to Lochlie, a hundred-and-thirty acre farm, in Tarbolton Parish. 'The nature of the bargain,' Robert wrote to Moore, 'was such as to throw a little ready money in his hand in the commencement,' or 'the affair would have been impracticable.'

At Lochlie.

At this place, he adds, 'for four years we lived comfortably'; and at this place his gay and adventurous spirit began to free itself, his admirable talent for talk to find fit opportunities for exercise and display. The reaction set in, as I have said, and he took life as gallantly as his innocence might, wore the only tied hair in the parish, was recognisable from afar by his fillemot plaid, was made a 'Free and Accepted Mason,'¹ founded a Bachelors'

definite enough. But surely the Factor verses in *The Twa Dogs* are less a picture than a record of proceedings, a note on the *genus* Factor :—

'He'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear,
While they must stand, wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', and fear and tremble.'

The statement is accurate enough, no doubt, but where is the 'picture'? Compare the effect of any one of Chaucer's Pilgrims, or the sketches of Cæsar and Luath themselves, and the Factor as individual is found utterly wanting.

¹ Burns was always an enthusiastic Mason. The Masonic idea—whatever that may be—went home to him; and in honour of the Craft he wrote some of his poorest verses. One set, the 'Adieu, Adieu,' etc., of the Kilmarnock Volume, was popular outside Scotland. At all events, I have seen a parody in a Belfast chap which is set to the tune of *Burns's Farewell*.

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Club,¹ and took to sweethearting with all his heart and soul and strength. He had begun with a little harvester at fifteen, and at Kirkoswald he had been enamoured of Peggy Thomson to the point of sleepless nights. Now, says his brother Gilbert, 'he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver'—sometimes of two or three at a time ; and 'the symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho,' so that 'the agitation of his mind and body exceeded anything I know in real life.' Such, too, was the quality of what he himself was pleased to call 'un penchant à (*sic*) l'adorable moitié du genre humain,' in combination with that 'particular jealousy' he had 'of people that were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life,' that a plain face was quite as good as a pretty one : especially and particularly if it belonged to a maid of a lower degree than his own. To condescend upon one's women—to some men that is an ideal. It was certainly the ideal of Robert Burns. 'His love,' says Gilbert, 'rarely settled upon persons of this description'—that is, persons 'who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life.' He must still be Jove—still stoop from Olympus to the plain. Apparently he held it to be an honour to be admired by him ; and when, a short while hence (1786), he ventured

¹ It was, in fact, part drinking-club and part debating-society. But Rule X. of its constitution insisted that every member must have at least one love-affair on hand ; and if potations were generally thin, and debates were often serious, there can be no question that the talk ran on all manner of themes, and especially on that one theme which men have ever found fruitful above all others. The club was so great a success that an offshoot was founded, by desire, on Robert's removal to Mossiel.

ESSAYS

Love and
rhyme.

to celebrate, in rather too realistic a strain, the Lass of Ballochmyle, and was rebuffed for his impertinence—(it was so felt in those unregenerate days!)—he was, 'tis said, extremely mortified. In the meanwhile, his loves, whether pretty or plain, were goddesses all; and the Sun was 'entering Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my imagination,' the whole year round; and the wonder is that he got off so little of it all in verse which he thought too good for the fire. Rhyme he did (of course), and copiously: as at this stage every coming male must rhyme, who has instinct enough to 'couple *love* and *dove*.' But it was not till the end of the Lochlie years that he began rhyming to any purpose. Indeed, the poverty of the Lochlie years is scarce less 'wonderful past all whooping' than the fecundity of certain memorable months at Mauchline: especially if it be true, as Gilbert and himself aver, that the Lochlie love-affairs were 'governed by the strictest rules of modesty and virtue, from which he never deviated till his twenty-third year.'¹

¹ Saunders Tait, the Tarbolton poetaster, insists that, long before Mossgiel, Burns and Sillar—'Davie, a Brother Poet'—were the most incontinent youngsters in Tarbolton Parish; and, after asseverating, in terms as solemn as he can make them, that in all Scotland

'There's none like you and Burns can tout
The bawdy horn,'

goes on to particularise, and declares that, what with 'Moll and Meg,

Jean, Sue, and Lizzey, a' decoy't,
There's sax wi' egg.'

Worse than all, he indites a 'poem,' a certain *B—ns* in his *Infancy*, which begins thus:—

'Now I must trace his pedigree,
Because he made a song on me,

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For desire makes verses, and verses rather good than bad, as surely as fruition leaves verses, whether bad or good, unmade.

It was natural and honourable in a young man of this lusty and amatorious habit to look round for a wife and to cast about him for a better means of keeping one than farm-service would afford. In respect of the first he found a possibility in Ellison Begbie, a Galston farmer's daughter, at this time a domestic servant, on whom he wrote (they say) his 'Song of Similes,' and to whom he addressed some rather stately, not to say pedantic, documents in the form of love-letters. For the new line in life, he

And let the world look and see,
Just wi' my tongue,
How he and Clottie did agree
When he was young':—

and of which I shall quote no more. But Robert and his brother are both explicit on this point; and despite the easy morals of the class in which the Bard sought now and ever 'to crown his flame,' it must be held, I think, as proven, that he was *déniaisé* by Richard Brown at Irvine and by Betty Paton at Lochlie.

This is the place to say that I owe my quotations from Saunders Tait to Dr. Grosart, who told me of the copy (probably unique) of that worthy's Poems and Songs: 'Printed for and Sold by the Author Only, 1796': in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, and at the same time communicated transcripts which he had made from such numbers in it as referred to Burns. As my collaborator, Mr. T. F. Henderson, was then in Scotland, I asked him to look up Tait's volume. It was found at last, after a prolonged search; was duly sent to the Burns Exhibition; and in a while was pronounced 'a discovery.' Tait, who was pedlar, tailor, soldier in turn, had a ribald and scurrilous tongue, a certain rough cleverness, and a good enough command of the vernacular; so that his tirades against Burns—he was one of the very few who dared to attack that satirist—are still readable, apart from the interest which attaches to their theme. It is a pity that some Burns Club or Burns Society has not reprinted them in full, coarse as they are.

ESSAYS

Flax-
dressing.

determined that it might, perhaps, be flax-dressing ; so, at the midsummer of 1781 (having just before been sent about his business by, as he might himself have said, 'le doux objet de son attachement') he removed to Irvine, a little port on the Firth of Clyde, which was also a centre of the industry in which he hoped to excel. Here he established himself, on what terms is not known, with one Peacock, whom he afterwards took occasion to describe as 'a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of Thieving' ;¹ here he saw something more of life and character and the world than he had seen at Mount Oliphant and Lochlie ; here, at the year's end, he had a terrible attack of vapours (it lasted for months, he says, so that he shuddered to recall the time) ; here, above all, he formed a friendship with a certain Richard Brown. According to him, Brown being the son of a mechanic, had taken the eye of 'a great man in the neighbourhood,' and had received 'a genteel education, with a view to bettering his situation in life.' His patron had died, however, and he had perforce to go for a sailor (he was afterwards captain of a West-Indiaman). He had known good luck and

His friend-
ship with
Richard
Brown.

¹ Nobody knows what this may mean. It seems to be only Robert's lofty way of saying that Peacock swindled him. What follows is explicit (*Letter to Moore*) :—'To finish the whole, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year, our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire, and burned to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth sixpence.' How much is here of fact, how much of resentment, who shall say ? What is worth noting in it all is that Burns, despite his 'penchant à l'adorable,' etc., is first and last a peasant so far as 'l'adorable moitié' is concerned, and, for all his sentimentalism, can face facts about it with all the peasant's shrewdness and with all the peasant's cynicism.

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bad, he had seen the world, he had the morals of his calling, at the same time that 'his mind was fraught with courage, independence, and magnanimity, and every noble, manly virtue'; and Burns, who 'loved him,' and 'admired him,' not only 'strove to imitate him' but also 'in some measure succeeded.' 'I had,' the pupil owns, 'the pride before'; but Brown 'taught it to flow in proper channels.' Withal, Brown 'was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when Woman was the presiding star.' Brown, however, was a practical amorist; and he 'spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.' In fact, he was Mephisto to Burns's Faust;¹ and 'here,' says the Bard, 'his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was, that soon after I assumed the plough, I wrote the enclosed *Welcome*.' This enclosure (to Moore) was that half-humorous, half-defiant, and wholly delightful *Welcome to His Love-Begotten Daughter*,² through which the spirit of the true Burns—the Burns of the good years: proud, generous, whole-hearted, essentially natural and humane—thrills from the first line to the last. And

¹ Brown denied it. 'Illicit love!' quoth he. 'Levity of a sailor! When I first knew Burns he had nothing to learn in that respect.' It is a case of word against word; and I own that I prefer the Bard's.

² 'The same cheap self-satisfaction finds a yet uglier vent when he plumes himself on the scandal at the birth of his first bastard child.' Thus Stevenson. But Stevenson, as hath been said, had in him 'Something of the Shorter Catechist'; and either he did not see, or he would not recognise, that Burns's rejoicings in the fact of paternity were absolutely sincere throughout his life.

ESSAYS

A peasant in
revolt.

we have to recall the all-important fact, that Burns was first and last a peasant,¹ and first and last a peasant in revolt against the Kirk, a peasant resolute to be a buck, to forgive the really scandalous contrast presented in those versions of the affair—(versions done in the true buckish style: the leer, and the grin and the slang in full blast)—which he has given in *The Fornicator*, the *Epistle to John Rankine*, and—apparently—the *Reply to a Trimming Epistle from a Tailor*. At the same time we must clearly understand that we recall all this for the sake of our precious selves, and not in any way, nor on any account, for the sake of Burns. He was absolutely of his station and his time; the poor-living, lewd, grimy, free-spoken, ribald, old Scots peasant-world² came to a full, brilliant, even majestic close in his work; and, if we would appreciate aright the environment in which he wrote, and the audience to which such writings were addressed, we must transliterate into the Vernacular Brantôme and the *Dames Galantes* and Tallemant and the *Historiettes*. As for reading them in Victorian terms—Early-Victorian terms, or Late—that way madness lies; madness, and a Burns that by no process known to gods or men could ever have existed save in the lubber-land of some Pious Editor's dream.

¹ Here and elsewhere the word is used, not opprobriously, but literally. Burns was specifically a peasant, as Byron was specifically a peer, and as Shakespeare was specifically a man of the burgess class.

² I do not, of course, forget its many solid and admirable virtues; but its elements were mixed, and it was to the grosser that the Burns of these and other rhymes appealed.

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At Lochlie, whither he seems to have returned in the March of 1782, the studious years¹ and the old comparative prosperity had come, or were coming, to a close. There had been a quarrel between William Burness and his landlord, one M'Clure, a merchant in Ayr; and this quarrel, being about money, duly passed into the Courts. Its circumstances are obscure; but it is history that arbitration went against the tenant of Lochlie, that he was ordered to 'quite possession,' that he was strongly suspected of 'preparing himself accordingly by dispossessing of his stock and crops,' and that a certain 'application at present craving' resulted, on shrieval authority, in the 'sequestration' of all the Lochlie stock and plenishing and gear. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the affair, an end came to it with the end of William Burness. By this time his health was broken—he was far gone in what Robert calls a 'phthysical consumption'; and he died in the February of the next year (1784), when, as the same Robert romantically puts it in his fine, magniloquent fashion, 'his all went among the rapacious hellhounds that growl in the Kennel of Justice.'² The

The death
of William
Burness.

¹ It was parish gossip that, if you called on William Burness at meal-time, you found the whole family with a book in one hand and a horn spoon in the other.

² M'Clure's 'answers' and 'counter-answers,' together with the sheriff's officer's account of the seizure of Lochlie, were published in *The Glasgow Herald* early in the present year, (1897). I need scarce say that Saunders Tait produced a *Burns at Lochly*, in which he fell on his enemy tooth and claw. His statements are as specific as M'Clure's, and are substantially in agreement with some of them, besides:—

'To Lochly ye came like a clerk,
And on your back was scarce a sark,

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fact that Robert and Gilbert were able (Martinmas 1783), when their father's affairs were 'drawing to a crisis,' to secure another farm—Mossgiel—in Mauchline Parish, some two or three miles off

The dogs did at your buttocks bark,
But now ye're bra',
Ye pouch't the rent, ye was sae stark,
Made payment sma'.

In another stanza, 'M'Clure,' he says—

'Ye scarcely left a mite
To fill his horn,
You and the Lawyers gied him a skyte,
Sold a' his corn.'

In a third he appears to record the particulars of a single combat between Robert and his father's landlord :—

'His ain gun at him he did cock,
An' never spared,
Wi't owre his heid came a clean knock
Maist killed the laird.'

And in the last of all, after bitterly reproaching Robert and the whole Burns race with ingratitude :—

'M'Clure he put you in a farm,
And coft you coals your a—— to warm
And meal and maut. . . .
He likewise did the mailin stock,
And built you barns' :—

he sets forth explicitly this charge :—

'M'Clure's estate has ta'en the fever,
And heal again it will be never,
The vagabonds, they ca' you clever,
Ye're sic a sprite,
To rive fra' him baith ga' and liver,
And baith the feet.'

The fact of the Laird's generosity is reaffirmed with emphasis in *A Compliment* :—

'The horse, corn, pets, kail, kye, and ewes,
Cheese, pease, beans, rye, wool, house and flours,
Pots, pans, crans, tongs, bran-spits, and skewrs,
The milk and barm,
Each thing they had was a' M'Clure's,
He stock'd the farm. . . .

And with the remark that '*Five hundred pounds they were behind,*' the undaunted Saunders brings his libel to a close.

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Lochlie, is enough to show that neither errors nor crosses, neither sequestrations nor lampoons, had impaired the family credit.

III

WILLIAM BURNES had paid his children wages during his tenancy of Lochlie; and the elder four, by presenting themselves as his creditors for wages due, were enabled to secure a certain amount of 'plenishing and gear' wherewith to make a start at Mossgiel. It was a family venture, in whose success the Burnesses were interested all and severally, and to which each one looked for food and clothes and hire (the brothers got a yearly fee of £7 apiece); and, as all were well and thoroughly trained in farming work, and had never lived other than sparsely, it was reasonable in them to believe that the enterprise would prosper. That it did not begin by prospering was no fault of Robert's. He made excellent resolutions, and, what was more to the purpose, he kept them—for a time. He 'read farming books' (thus he displays himself), he 'calculated crops,' he 'attended markets'; he worked hard in the fields, he kept his body at least in temperance and soberness, and, as for thrift, there is Gilbert's word for it, that his expenses never exceeded his income of £7 a year. It availed him nothing. Gilbert is said to have been rather a theorist than a sound practician; and Robert, though a skilled farmer, cared nothing for business, and left him a free hand in the conduct of affairs. Luck, too, was against them from the first; and

The farm at
Mossgiel.

Failure and
ill-luck.

ESSAYS

An unsuccessful farmer.

very soon the elder's genius was revealed to him, and he had other than farmer's work to do. 'In spite of the Devil,' he writes, 'the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man ; but the first year, from unfortunately buying in bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half of both our crops.' Naturally, 'this' (and some other things) 'overset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit"—(be it remembered, it is Robert Burns who speaks: not I)—"and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."' That the confession, with its rather swaggering allusion to the Armour business, was true, is plain. But we do not need Burns's assurance to know that, though he could do his work, and prided himself on the straightness of his furrows, he was scarce cut out for a successful farmer—except, it may be, in certain special conditions. Endurance, patience, diligence, a devout attention to one's own interest and the land's, an indomitable constancy in labour to certain ends and in thought on certain lines—these are some of the qualities which make the husbandman ; and, this being so, how should Mossgiel have prospered under Rab the Ranter? His head was full of other things than crops and cattle. He was bursting with intelligence, ideas, the consciousness of capacity, the desire to take his place among men ; and in Mauchline he found livelier friends¹ and greater opportunities than he

¹ As his landlord, the lawyer Gavin Hamilton, to whom he dedicated the Kilmarnock Volume, and the story of whose wrangle with the Mauchline Kirk-Session (see Vol. i. pp. 147-152, 188, 378-9, etc.) is to some extent that of Burns's assault upon the Kirk (see Vol. ii. *Holy Willie's Prayer*, pp. 25-30,

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had found elsewhere. Being a Scot, he was instinctively a theologian ; being himself, he was inevitably liberal-minded ; born a peasant of genius, and therefore a natural rebel, he could not choose but quarrel with the Kirk—especially as her hand was heavy on his friends and himself—and it was as a Mauchline man that the best of his anti-clerical work was done.¹ Then, too, he was full of

and Notes, pp. 320-324). Another was Robert Aitken, also a lawyer, by whom he was 'read into fame,' to whom he dedicated *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and whom he celebrated in an Epitaph (Vol. i. p. 188). Yet another was Richmond, the lawyer's clerk, whose room he was afterwards to share in Edinburgh, and who appears to be partly responsible for the preservation of *The Jolly Beggars*. Again, there was the Bachelors' Club, on the model of that he had founded at Tarbolton, for whose edification, and in explanation of whose function, he appears to have written *The Fornicator* and *The Court of Equity*. This last is Burns's idea of what the proceedings of the Kirk-Session ought, in certain cases, to have been. It is capital fun, but something too frank and too particular for latter-day print.

¹ He was ever a theological liberal and a theological disputant—a champion of Heterodoxy, in however mild a form, whose disputations made him notorious, so that his name was as a stumbling-block and an offence to the Orthodox. For the series of attacks which he delivered against the Kirk—*The Holy Fair*, the *Address to the Deil*, *The Twa Herds*, *The Ordination*, *Holy Willie*, *The Kirk's Alarm*, the Epistles *To The Unco Guid* and *To John Goldie*—see Vols. i. and ii. (Text and Notes). There is no record of an appearance on the stool with Paton ; but the circumstances of this his initial difficulty appear to be set forth in the *Epistle to Rankine* (i. 155) and the *Reply to a Trimming Epistle* (ii. 96), with the Notes thereto appended. All these read, considered, and digested, what interest remains in Burns's quarrel with the Kirk consists in the fact that, being a person naturally and invincibly opposed to the 'sour-featured Whiggism' on which the Stuarts had wrecked themselves, Burns was naturally and invincibly a Jacobite. His Jacobitism was, he said, 'by way of *vive la bagatelle*.' He told Ramsay of Auchtertyre that he owed it to the plundering and unhousing (1715) of his grandfather, who was gardener to Earl Marischal at Inverurie (*sic*). But it came to him mainly through Gavin Hamilton (who was Episcopalian by descent) and his own resentment of clerical tyranny.

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rhymes, and they must out of him: his call had come, and he fell to obeying it with unexampled diligence. More than all, perhaps, he had the temperament of the *viveur*—the man who rejoices to live his life; and his appetites had been intensified, his gift of appreciation made abnormal (so to say), by a boyhood and an adolescence of singular hardship and quite exceptional continence. It is too late in the world's history to apologise for the primordial instinct; and to do so at any time were sheer impertinence and unreasoning ingratitude. To apologise in the case of a man who so exulted in its manifestations and results, and who so valiantly, not to say riotously, insisted on the fact of that exultation, as Robert Burns, were also a rank and frank absurdity. On this point he makes doubt impossible. The 'white flower of a blameless life' was never a buttonhole for *him*:¹ his utterances, published and unpublished, are there to show that he would have disdained the presumption that it

¹ It is true that he wrote thus 'To a Young Friend':—

'The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!'

But there is plenty to show that the writer was a great deal better at preaching than at practice. And he owns as much himself in his own epitaph:—

'Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career
Wild as the wave?—
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.'

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ever could have been. And it is from Mauchline, practically, that, his affair with Betty Paton over and done with, and, to anticipate a little, his affair with Jean Armour left hanging in the wind, he starts on his career as amorist at large.

And now for a little narrative. In the November Narrative. of 1784 Elizabeth Paton bore him a daughter: 'the First Instance,' so he wrote above his *Welcome*, 'that entitled him to the Venerable Appellation of Father.' The mother is described as 'very plain-looking,' but of 'an exceedingly handsome figure'; 'rude and uncultivated to a great degree,' with a 'strong masculine understanding, and a thorough, though unwomanly, contempt for any sort of refinement'; withal, 'so active, honest, and independent a creature' that Mrs. Burns would have had Robert marry her, but 'both my aunts and Uncle Gilbert opposed it,' in the belief that 'the faults of her character would soon have disgusted him.' There had been no promise on his part; and though the reporter (his niece, Isabella Begg) has his own sister's warrant—(Mrs. Begg, by the way, was rather what her brother, in a mood of acute fraternal piety, might possibly have called 'a bletherin' b—tch')—for saying that 'woman never loved man with a more earnest devotion than that poor woman did him,' he in nowise sentimentalised about her. She is identified with none of his songs; and while there is a pleasant reference to her in the *Welcome*:—

'Thy mither's person, grace, and merit':—

she is recognisably the 'pattrick' of the *Epistle to*

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Rankine, she is certainly the heroine of *The Fornicator*, she probably does duty in the *Reply to a Trimming Epistle*, none of which pieces shows the writer's 'penchant à l'adorable,' etc., to advantage. No doubt, they were addressed to men. No doubt, too, they were, first and last, satirical impeachments of the Kirk: impeachments tinctured with the peasant's scorn of certain existing circumstances, and done with all the vigour and the *furia* which one particular peasant—a peasant who could see through shams and was intolerant of them—could with both hands bestow. And that the women did not resent their share in such things is shown by the fact that such things got done. It was 'the tune of the time'—in the peasant-world at least. Still, as Diderot says somewhere or other:—'On aime celle à qui on le donne, on est aimé de celle à qui on le prend.' And one can't help regretting that there are few or none but derisive references to Betty Paton in her lover's work.

IV

The Poet's Muse. OF vastly greater importance than his mistresses, at this or any period of his life, is the entity, which, with an odd little touch of Eighteenth Century formality, he loved to call his Muse. That entity was now beginning to take shape and substance as a factor in the sum of the world's happiness; and the coming of that other entity in whose existence he took so high a pride and so constant a delight—I mean 'the Bard'—was but a matter of time. Burns had been ever a rhymester; and Burns, who,

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as Stevenson observed, and as the Notes to these Volumes have shown, 'was always ready to borrow the hint of a design, as though he had some difficulty in commencing,' had begun by borrowing his style, as well as divers hints of designs, from stall-artists and neighbour-cuckoos. But, once emancipated, once a man, once practically assured of the primal concerns of life, once conscious that (after all) he might have the root of the matter in him, the merely local poet begins to waver and dislimn, and the Burns of *Poor Mailie* (written at Lochlie) and the *Epistle to Davie* reigns—intermittently, perhaps, but obviously—in his stead. It is all over with stall-artists and neighbour-cuckoos. Poor Fergusson's book¹ has fallen in his hands, and (as he says

¹ Robert Fergusson (1750-1774) was certainly a prime influence in Burns's poetical life. Nevertheless—or shall I say consequently?—he has had less than justice from the most of Burns's Editors. Yet in his way he was so remarkable a creature that there can be no question but in his death, at four-and-twenty, a great loss was inflicted on Scottish literature. He had intelligence and an eye, a right touch of humour, the gifts of invention and observation and style, together with a true feeling for country and city alike; and his work in the Vernacular (his English verse is rubbish), with its easy expressiveness, its vivid and unshrinking realism, and a merit in the matter of character and situation which makes it—not readable only, but—interesting as art, at the same time that it is valuable as history, is nothing less than memorable: especially in the view of the miserable circumstances—(the poor lad was a starveling scrivener, and died, partly of drink, in the public madhouse)—in which it was done. Burns, who learned much from Fergusson, was an enthusiast in his regard for him; bared his head and shed tears over 'the green mound and the scattered gowans' under which he found his exemplar lying in Canongate Churchyard; got leave from the managers to put up a headstone at his own cost there, and wrote an epitaph to be inscribed upon it, one line of which—

'No storied urn nor animated bust,'

is somehow to be read in Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Fergusson was as essentially an Edinburgh product—

ESSAYS

The
influence of
Fergusson.

English
and the
Vernacular.

in his ridiculous way) has 'caused him to string anew his wildly-sounding rustic lyre with emulating vigour.' At last the hour of the Vernacular Muse has come ; and he is hip to haunch with such adepts in her mystery as the Sempills, and Hamilton of Gilbertfield, and Allan Ramsay, and Robert Fergusson, and the innominates whose verses, decent or not, have lived in his ear since childhood ; catching their tone and their sentiment ; mastering their rhythms ; copying their methods ; considering their effects in the one true language of his mind.¹ He could write deliberate English, and, when he wanted to be not so much sincere as impressive and 'fine,' he wrote English deliberately, as the worse and weaker part of his achievement remains to prove. He could even write English, as Jourdain talked prose, 'without knowing it'—as we know from *Scots Wha Hae*. He read Pope, Shenstone, Beattie, Goldsmith, Gray, and the rest, with so much enthusiasm that one learned Editor has made an interesting little list of pilferings from the works of these distinguished beings. But, so far as I can see, he might have lived and died an English writing Scot, and nobody been a thrill or a memory

(the old Scots capital: gay, squalid, drunken, dirty, lettered, venerable: lives in his verses much as Burns knew it twelve years after his death)—as the late R. L. S. himself; and, while I write, old memories come back to me of the admiring terms: terms half-playful, half-affectionate: in which the later artist was wont to speak of his all but forgotten ancestor.

¹ I do not forget that Dugald Stewart noted the correctness of his speech and the success with which he avoided the use of Scotticisms. But in his day Scots was, not an accent but, a living tongue; and he certainly could not have talked at Mauchline and at Dumfries as he did in a more or less polite and Anglified Edinburgh.

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the better for his work. It is true that much of the *Saturday Night* and the *Vision* and the *Mountain Daisy* is written in English ;¹ but one may take leave to wonder if these pieces, with so much else of Burns's own, would have escaped the 'iniquity of Oblivion,' had they not chanced, to their good fortune, to be companioned with *Halloween*, and *Holy Willie*, and *The Farmer to His Auld Mare*, and a score of masterpieces besides, in which the Vernacular is carried to the highest level—in the matter of force and fire, and brilliancy of diction, and finality of effect, to name but these—it has ever reached in verse.² Let this be as it may :

¹ He contrives a compromise, to admirable purpose, too, in *Tam o' Shanter* : which is written partly in English and partly in the Vernacular. But (1) *Tam o' Shanter* is in a rhythmus classical in Scotland since the time of Barbour's *Bruce* ; (2) the English parts of *Tam o' Shanter* are of no particular merit as *poetry*—that is, 'the only words in the only order' ; and (3) the best of *Tam o' Shanter* is in the Vernacular alone. Contrast, for instance, the diabolical fire and movement and energy of these lines :—

' They reeled, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark ' :—

with another famous—perhaps too famous—passage :—

' But pleasures are like poppies spread :
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed,' etc.

In the second the result is merely Hudibrastic. In the first the suggestion—of mingled fury and stink and motion and heat and immitigable ardour—could only have been conveyed by the Vernacular Burns.

² It was Wordsworth's misfortune that, being in revolt against Augustan ideals and a worn-out poetic slang, he fell in with Burns, and sought to make himself out of common English just such a vocabulary as Burns's own. For he forgot that the Vernacular, in which his exemplar achieved such surprising and delectable results, had been a *literary* language for centuries when Burns began to work in it—that Burns, in fact, was handling with consummate skill a

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there can be no question that when Burns wrote English he wrote what, on his own confession, was practically a foreign tongue—a tongue in which he, no more than Fergusson or Ramsay, could express himself to any sufficing purpose; but that, when he used the dialect which he had babbled in babyhood, and spoken as boy and youth and man—the tongue, too, in which the chief exemplars and the ruling influences of his poetical life had wrought—he at once revealed himself for its greatest master since Dunbar.¹ More, much more, than that: his

A foreign
tongue.

tool whose capacity had been long since proved by Ramsay and Fergusson and the greater men who went before them; and, having no models to copy, and no verbal inspiration but his own to keep him straight, he came to immortal grief, not once but many times. It is pretended, too, that in the matter of style Burns had a strong influence on Byron. But had he? Byron praises Burns, of course; but is there ever a trace of Burns the lyricist in the Byron songs? Again, the Byron of *Childe Harold* and the tales was as it were a Babel in himself, and wrote Scott *plus* Coleridge *plus* Moore *plus* Beattie and Pope and the Augustan Age at large; while the Byron of *Beppo* and the *Vision* and *Don Juan* approves himself the master of a style of such infernal brilliancy and variety, of such a capacity for ranging heaven-high and hell-deep, that it cannot without absurdity be referred to anything except the fact that he also was a born great writer.

¹ For that is what it comes to in the end. He may seem to have little to do with Catholic and Feudal Scotland, and as little with the Scotland of the Early Reformation and the First Covenant. Also, it is now impossible to say if he knew any more of Scott and Dunbar and the older makers (Davie Lindsay and Barbour excepted) than he found in *The Ever Green*, which Ramsay garbled out of *The Bannatyne MS.*, if he were read in Pinkerton (1786), or if he got much more out of Gawain Douglas than the verse which serves as a motto to *Tam o' Shanter*: though a letter to Cleghorn shows that he certainly possessed a copy of that poet before 1796. The Scotland he represents, and of which his verses are the mirror, is the Scotland out of which the 'wild Whigs' crushed the taste for everything but fornication and theology and such expressions of derision and revolt as *Jenny M'Craw* and *Errock Brae*: the Scotland whose literary beginnings

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bearings once found, he marked his use of it by the discovery of a quantity hitherto unknown in literature. Himself, to wit: the amazing compound of style and sentiment with gaiety and sympathy, of wit and tenderness with radiant humour and an admirable sense of art, which is Robert Burns.

He could write ill, and was capable of fustian. His fustian. But, excepting in his 'Epigrams' and 'Epitaphs' and in his imitations of poets whose methods he did not understand, he was nearly always a great writer, and he was generally (to say the least) incapable of fustian in the Vernacular. In essaying the effects of Pope and Shenstone and those other unfamiliars, he was like a man with a personal hand set to imitate a writing-master's copy: he made as good a shot as he could at it, but there was none of himself in the result. It was otherguess work when he took on the methods and the styles in which his countrymen had approved themselves: these he could compass so well that he could far surpass his exemplars technically, and could adequately express the individual Burns besides. The *Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie* (written at Lochlie, The individual Burns. and therefore very early work) trace back to Gilbert-field's *Bonnie Heck*; but the older piece is realistic in purpose and brutal in effect, while in the later—

date, you'd fancy, not from Henryson, not from Dunbar and Douglas and the Lyon King-at-Arms, but from Sempill of Beltrees and the men who figure in the three issues of Watson's *Choice Collection*. But Ramsay and his fellows were a revival—not a new birth. The Vernacular School is one and indivisible. There are breaks in the effect; but the tradition remains unbroken. And Burns, for all his comparative modernity, descends directly from, and is, in fact, the last of that noble line which begins with Robert Henryson.

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to say nothing of the farce in *Hughoc*—the whole philosophy of life of a decent mother-ewe is imagined with delightful humour, and set forth in terms so kindly in spirit and so apt in style, that the *Death and Dying Words* is counted one of the imperishables in English letters. Contrast, again, *The Elegy*. the *Elegy*, written some time after the *Death and Dying Words*, on this immortal beast, with its exemplars in Watson and Ramsay :—

‘ He was right nacky in his way,
An’ eydent baith be night and day ;
He wi’ the lads his part could play
 When right sair fleed,
He gart them good bull-sillar pay ;
 But now he ’s dead. . . .’

‘ Wha ’ll jow Ale on my drouthy Tongue,
To cool the heat of Lights and Lung ?
Wha ’ll bid me, when the Kaile-bell’s rung,
 To Buird me speed ? . . .
Wha ’ll set me by the Barrel-bung ?
 Since Sanny’s dead ? . . .’

‘ He was good Company at Jeists,
And wanton when he came to Feasts ;
He scorn’d the Converse of great Beasts
 [F]or a Sheep’s-head ;
He leugh at Stories about Ghaists—
 Blythe Willie’s dead ’ :—

and you shall find the difference still more glaring. Cleverness apart—cleverness and the touch of life, the element of realism—the Laments for *Hab Simson* and *Sanny Briggs*, for *John Cowper* and *Luckie Wood* and the *Writer Lithgow*,¹ are merely

¹ All five, together with Ramsay’s on *Luckie Spence* (an Edinburgh bawd) and *Last Words of a Wretched Miser*,

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squalid and cynical ; while in every line the *Elegy*, in despite of realism and the humorous tone and intent (essential to the models and therefore inevitable in the copy) is the work of a writer of genius, who is also a generous human being.¹ Very early work, again, are *Corn Rigs* and *Green Grow the Rashes* ; in suggestion, inspiration, technical quality, both are unalterably Scots ; and in both the effect of mastery and completeness is of those that defy the touch of Time. To compare these two and any two of Burns's songs in English, or pseudo-English, is to realise that the poet of these two should never have ventured outside the pale of his supremacy. English had ten thousand secrets which he knew not, nor could ever have known, except imperfectly ; for he recked not of those innumerable traditions, associations, connotations, surprises, as it were ambitions, which make up the romantic and the literary life of words—even as he

Scots and
English.

should be read for the sake of their likeness, and at the same time their unlikeness, to not a little in Burns, and in illustration of the truth that the Vernacular tradition was one of humorous, and even brutal realism. I have cited R. L. S. in connection with Fergusson. He had a far higher esteem for that maker than he had for that maker's ancestor, Allan Ramsay. Yet he quoted to me one day a stanza from the *John Cowper*, a certain phrase in which—a phrase obscenely significant of death—was, we presently agreed, as good an example of 'the Squalid-Picturesque' as could be found out of Villon.

¹ His suppression of such an old-fashioned touch in the first draft as this one :—

' Now Robin greetan chows the hams
Of Mailie dead ' :—

is significant. It is quite in the vein of *Bonnie Heck*, as indeed are the first four stanzas. But it would have ruined the *Elegy* as the world has known it since 1786.

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was penetrated and possessed by the sense of any such elements as may have existed in the Vernacular. Thus, if he read Milton, it was largely, if not wholly, with a view to getting himself up as a kind of Tarbolton Satan. He was careless, so I must contend, of Shakespeare. With such knowledge as he could glean from song-books, he was altogether out of touch with the Elizabethans and the Carolines. Outside the Vernacular, in fact, he was a rather unlettered Eighteenth Century Englishman, and the models which he must naturally prefer before all others were academic, stilted, artificial, and unexemplary to the highest point. It may be that I read the verse of Burns, and all Scots verse, with something of that feeling of 'preciousness' which everybody has, I take it, in reading a language, or a dialect, not his own: the feeling which blinds one to certain sorts of defect, and gives one an uncritical capacity for appreciating certain sorts of merit. However this be, I can certainly read my mother-tongue; and most Englishmen—with, I should imagine, many Scots—will agree with me in the wish that Burns, for all the brilliant compromise between Scots and English which is devised and done in *Tam o' Shanter* and elsewhere, had never pretended to a mastery which assuredly he had not, nor in his conditions ever could have had.

A natural development. I have stressed this point because I wish to stress another, and with a view to making clear, and to setting in its proper perspective, the fact that, genius apart, Burns was, no miracle but, a natural development of circumstance and time. The fact is patent enough to all but them that, for a superstition's

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sake, insist on ignoring history, and decline to recognise the unchanging processes of natural and social Law. Without the achievement of Æschylus, there can be no such perfection as Sophocles: just as, that perfection achieved, the decline of Tragedy, as in Euripides, is but a matter of time. But for the Middle Ages and the reaction against the Middle Ages there could have been no Ronsard, no Rabelais, no Montaigne in France. Had there been no Surrey and no Marlowe, no Chaucer and no Ovid (to name no more than these in a hundred influences), who shall take on himself to say the shape in which we now should be privileged to regard the greatest artist that ever expressed himself in speech? It is in all departments of human energy as in the eternal round of nature. There can be no birth where there is no preparation. The sower must take his seedsheet, and go afield into ground prepared for his ministrations; or there can be no harvest. The Poet springs from a compost of ideals and experiences and achievements, whose essences he absorbs and assimilates, and in whose absence he could not be the Poet. This is especially true of Burns. He was the last of a school. It culminated in him, because he had more genius, and genius of a finer, a rarer, and a more generous quality, than all his immediate ancestors put together. But he cannot fairly be said to have contributed anything to it except himself. He invented none of its forms; its spirit was not of his originating; its ideals and standards of perfection were discovered, and partly realised, by other men; and he had a certain

The last of
a school.

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His debt
to others.

timidity, as it were a *fainéantise*, in conception—a kind of unreadiness in initiative—which makes him more largely dependent upon his exemplars than any great poet has ever been. Not only does he take whatever the Vernacular School can give in such matters as tone, sentiment, method, diction, phrase; but also, he is content to run in debt to it for suggestions as regards ideas and for models in style. Hamilton of Gilbertfield and Allan Ramsay conventionalise the Rhymed Epistle; and he accepts the convention as it left their hands, and produces epistles in rhyme which are glorified Hamilton-Ramsay. Fergusson writes *Caller Water*, and *Leith Races*, and *The Farmer's Ingle*, and *Planestanes and Causey*, and the *Ode to the Gowdspink*; and he follows suit with *Scotch Drink*, and the *Saturday Night*, and *The Holy Fair*, and *The Brigs of Ayr*, and the *Mouse* and the *Mountain Daisy*. Sempill of Beltrees starts a tradition with *The Piper of Kilbarchan*; and his effect is plain in the elegies on Tam Samson and Poor Mailie. Ramsay sees a Vision, and tinkers old, indecent songs, and writes comic tales in glib octo-syllabics; and instinctively and naturally Burns does all three. It is as though some touch of rivalry were needed to put him on his mettle:¹ as though, instead of writing and

His need of
rivalry.

¹ It was with 'emulating vigour' that he strung his 'wildly-sounding rustic lyre'; and he read Ramsay and Fergusson not for 'servile imitation' but 'to kindle at their flame.' Another instance, or rather another suggestion, from himself, and I have done. It 'exalted,' it 'enraptured' him 'to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day,' and hear the wind roaring in the trees. Then was his 'best season for devotion,' for then was his mind 'rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who . . . "walks on the wings of the wind."' The 'rapture' and the 'exaltation' are

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caring for himself alone—(as Keats and Byron did, and Shelley ; new men all, and founders of dynasties, not final expressions of sovranity)—to be himself he must still be emulous of some one else. This is not written as a reproach ; it is stated as a fact. On the strength of that fact one cannot choose but abate the old, fantastic estimate of Burns's originality. But originality (to which, by the way, he laid no claim) is but one element in the intricately formed and subtly ordered plexus, which is called genius ; and I do not know that we need think any the less of Burns for that it is not predominant in him. Original or not, he had the Vernacular and its methods at his fingers' ends. Master of the Vernacular. He wrote the heroic couplet (on the Dryden-Pope convention) clumsily, and without the faintest idea of what it had been in Marlowe's hands, without the dimmest foreshadowing of what it was presently to be in Keats's ; he had no skill in what is called 'blank verse'—by which I mean the metre in which Shakespeare triumphed, and Milton after Shakespeare, and Thomson and Cowper, each according to his lights, after Shakespeare and Milton ; he was a kind of hob-nailed Gray in his use of choric strophes and in his apprehension of the ode. But he entered into the possession of such artful and difficult stanzas as that of Montgomerie's *Banks of Helicon* and his own favourite sextain as an heir upon the ownership of an estate which he has known in all its details since he could know anything. It

but dimly and vaguely reflected in his *Winter*. But if some ancestor had tried to express a kindred feeling, then had *Winter* been a masterpiece.

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was fortunate for him and for his book, as it was fortunate for the world at large—as, too, it was afterwards to be fortunate for Scots song—that he was thus imitative in kind and thus traditional in practice. He had the sole ear of the Vernacular Muse ; there was not a tool in her budget of which he was not master ; and he took his place, the moment he moved for it, not so much, perhaps, by reason of his uncommon capacity¹ as, because he discovered himself to his public in the very terms—of diction, form, style, sentiment even—with which that public was familiar from of old, and in which it was waiting and longing to be addressed.

It was at Mossgiel that the enormous possibilities in Burns were revealed to Burns himself ; and it was at Mossgiel that he did nearly all his best and strongest work. The revelation once made, he stayed not in his course, but wrote masterpiece after masterpiece, with a rapidity, an assurance, a command of means, a brilliancy of effect, which make his achievement one of the most remarkable in English letters. To them that can rejoice in the Vernacular his very titles are enough to recall a little special world of variety and character and delight : the world, in fact, where you can take your choice among lyrical gems like *Corn Rigs* and *Green Grow*

His titles.

¹ In the same way Byron sold four or five editions of the *English Bards*, because it was written on a convention which was as old as Bishop Hall, and had been used by every satirist from the time of that master down to Mathias and Gifford. If he had cast his *libellus* into the octaves of *Don Juan*, the strong presumption is that it would have fallen still-born from the press. Other cases in point are Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Browning : the manner of each was new, and not all have reached the general yet.

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the Rashes and *Mary Morison* and masterpieces of satire like *Holy Willie* and the *Address to the Unco Guid*. To this time belong *The Jolly Beggars* and *Halloween* and *The Holy Fair*; to this time the *Louse* and the *Mouse*, the *Auld Mare* and the *Twa Dogs*; to this time, *Scotch Drink* and the *Address to the Deil*, the *Earnest Cry* and the *Mountain Daisy*, the *Epistles* to Smith and Rankine and Sillar and Lapraik, the *Elegies* on Tam Samson and the never-to-be-forgotten *Mailie*, the *Reply* to a Tailor and the *Welcome* and the *Saturday Night*. In some, as *The Ordination*, *The Holy Tulyie*, and, despite an unrivalled and inimitable picture of drunkenness, *Hornbook* itself, with others in a greater or less degree, the interest, once you have appreciated the technical quality as it deserves, is very largely local and particular.¹ In others, as the *Saturday Night* and *The Vision* (after the first stanzas of description), it is also very largely sentimental; and in both these it is further vitiated by the writer's 'falling to his English,' to a purpose not exhilarating to the student of Shakespeare and Milton and Herrick. But all this notwithstanding, and notwithstanding quite a little crowd of careless rhymes, the level of excellence is one that none but The level of excellence. the born great writer can maintain. Bold, graphic,

¹ There is a sense in which the most are local—are parochial even. In *Holy Willie* itself the type is not merely the Scots Calvinistic pharisee: it is a particular expression of that type; the thing is a local satire introducing the 'kail and potatoes' of a local scandal. Take, too, *The Holy Fair*: the circumstances, the manners, the characters, the experience—all are local. Apply the test to almost any—not forgetting the *Tam o' Shanter* which is the top of Burns's achievement—and the result is the same.

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Humour his
master-
quality.

variable, expressive, packed with observations and ideas, the phrases go ringing and glittering on through verse after verse, through stave after stave, through poem after poem, in a way that makes the reading of this peasant a peculiar pleasure for the student of style.¹ And if, with an eye for words and effects in words, that student have also the faculty of laughter, then are his admiration and his pleasure multiplied ten-fold. For the master-quality of Burns, the quality which has gone, and will ever go, the furthest to make him universally and perennially acceptable—acceptable in Melbourne (say) a hundred years hence as in Mauchline a hundred years syne—is humour. His sentiment

¹ It is not, remember, for 'the love of lovely words,' not for such perfections of human utterance as abound in Shakespeare :—

'Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy' :—

in Milton :—

'Now to the moon in wavering morrice move' :—

in Keats :—

'And hides the green hill in an April shroud' :—

in Herrick :—

'Ye have been fresh and green,
Ye have been filled with flowers,
And ye the walks have been
Where maids have spent their hours' :—

that we revert to Burns. Felicities he has—felicities innumerable; but his forebears set themselves to be humorous, racy, natural, and he could not choose but follow their lead. The Colloquial triumphs in his verse as nowhere outside the *Vision* and *Don Juan*; but for Beauty we must go elsewhere. He has all manner of qualities: wit, fancy, vision of a kind, nature, gaiety, the richest humour, a sort of home-spun verbal magic. But, if we be in quest of Beauty, we must e'en ignore him, and 'fall to our English': of whose secrets, as I have said, he never so much as suspected the existence, and whose supreme capacities were sealed from him until the end.

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is sometimes strained, obvious, and deliberate—as might be expected of the poet who foundered two pocket-copies of that very silly and disgusting book, *The Man of Feeling*; and it often rings a little false, as in much of the *Saturday Night*. But his humour—broad, rich, prevailing, now lascivious or gargantuan and now fanciful or jocose, now satirical and brutal and now instinct with sympathy, is ever irresistible. Holy Willie is much more vigorously alive in London, and Sydney, and Cape Town to-day than poor drunken old Will Fisher was in the Mauchline of 1785. That ‘pagan full of pride,’ the vigilant, tricky, truculent, familiar, true-blue Devil lives ever in Burns’s part pitying and fanciful, part humorous and controversial presentment; but he has long since faded out of his strongholds in the Kirk:—

‘But fare-ye-weel, Auld Nickie-Ben,
O, wad ye tak’ a thocht, an’ men’,
Ye aiblins nicht—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake!
I’m wae to think upon yon den,
Ev’n for your sake.’

Lockhart, ever the true Son of the Manse, was so misguided—so mansified, to coin a word—as to wish that Burns had written a *Holy Fair* in the spirit and to the purpose of *The Cotter’s Saturday Night*. But the bright, distinguishing qualities of *The Holy Fair* are humour and experience and sincerity; the intent of the *Saturday Night* is idyllic and sentimental, as its effect is laboured and unreal; and I, for my part, would not give my *Holy Fair*, still less my *Halloween* or my *Jolly*

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The Cotter's Saturday Night. *Beggars*—observed, selected, excellently reported—for a wilderness of *Saturday Nights*. It is not hard to understand that (given the *prestance* of its author) the *Saturday Night* was doomed to popularity from the first:¹ being of its essence sentimental and therefore pleasingly untrue, and being, also of its essence, patriotic—an assertion of the honour and the glory and the piety of Scotland. But that any one with an eye for fact and an ear for verse should prefer its tenuity of inspiration and its poverty of rhythm and diction before the sincere and abounding humour and the notable mastery of means, before the plenitude of life and the complete accord of design and effect, by which *Halloween*, and *The Holy Fair*, and nine-tenths of the early pieces in the Vernacular are distinguished, appears inexplicable. In these Burns is an artist and a poet: in the *Saturday Night* he is neither one nor other. In these, and in *Tam o' Shanter*, the Scots School culminates; as English Drama, with lyrical and elegiac English, culminates in *Othello* and the *Sonnets*, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the *Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*: more gloriously far than the world would ever have wagered on its beginnings. It is the most individual asset in the heritage bequeathed by 'the Bard'; and still more,

Tam o' Shanter.

¹ And such popularity! 'Poosie Nansie's'—(thus writes a friend, even as these sheets are passing through the press)—'or rather a house on the site of Poosie Nansie's, is, as you know, still a tavern. There is a large room (for parties) at the back. And what, think you, is the poem that, printed and framed and glazed, is hung in the place of honour on its walls? "*The Jolly Beggars*—naturally?" Not a bit of it. *The Cotter's Saturday Night*! Surrounded, too, by engravings depicting its choicest moments and its most affecting scenes.'

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perhaps,¹ than the Songs, it stamps and keeps him the National Poet. The world it pictures—the world of ‘Scotch morals, Scotch Religion, and Scotch drink’—may be ugly or not (as refracted through his temperament it is *not*). Ugly or not, however, it was the world of Burns ; to paint it was part of his mission ; it lives for us in his pictures ; and many such attempts at reconstruction as *The Earthly Paradise* and *The Idylls of the King* will ‘fade far away, dissolve,’ and be quite forgotten, ere these pictures disfigure or dislimn. He had the good sense to concern himself with the life he knew. The way of realism² lay broad-beaten by his an-

¹ I say, ‘perhaps,’ because Burns, among the general at least, is better sung than read. But if the Songs, his own and those which are effects of a collaboration, be the more national, the Poems are the greater, and it is chiefly to the Poems that Burns is indebted for his place in literature.

² It is claimed for him, with perfect truth, that he went straight to nature. But the Vernacular makers seldom did anything else. An intense and abiding consciousness of the common circumstances of life was ever the distinguishing note of Scots Poetry. It thrills through Henryson, through Dunbar and the Douglas of certain ‘Prolougs’ to *Eneados*, through Lindsay and Scott, through the nameless lyrist of *Peeblis at the Play* and *Christ’s Kirk on the Green*, through much of *The Bannatyne MS.*, the Sempill of the *Tulchene Bischope*, the Montgomerie of the *Flyting* with Polwarth and of certain sonnets :—

‘Raw reid herring reistit in the reik.’

It is even audible in the *Guid and Godlie Ballats* ; and after the silence it is heard anew in the verse which was made despite the Kirk, and in the verse which proceeded from that verse—the verse, that is, of Ramsay and Fergusson and Burns. This vivid and curious interest in facts is, as I think, a characteristic of the ‘perfervid ingyne.’ Compare, for instance, Pitscottie and Knox on the murder of Cardinal Beaton. The one is something naïve, the other as it were Shakespearean ; but in both the element of particularity is vital to the complete effect. These are two instances only ; but I could

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cestors, and was natural to his feet ; he followed it with vision, with humour, with 'inspiration and sympathy,' and with art ; and in the sequel he is found to have a place of his own in the first flight of English poets after Milton, Chaucer, Shakespeare.

V

His loves. I TAKE it that Burns was not more multifarious in his loves than most others in whom the primordial instinct is of peculiar strength. But it was written that English literature—the literature of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Fielding—should be turned into a kind of schoolgirls' playground ; so that careful Editors have done their best to make him even as themselves, and to fit him with a suit of practical and literary morals, which, if his own verse and prose mean anything, he would have refused, with

easily give two hundred. To return to Burns and his treatment of weather (say) and landscape. His verse is full of realities :—

' When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,
Or, wavering like the bauckie-bird,
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast ;
When hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte. . . .'
' The burn stealing under the lang, yellow broom. . . .'
' When, tumbling brown, the burn comes down. . . .'
' The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed. . . .'
' Yon murky cloud is foul with rain. . . .'
' November chill blows loud wi' angry sigh ' :—

all exactly noted and vividly recorded (a very instructive instance is the 'burnie' stanza in *Halloween* ; for he had, they say, a peculiar delight in running water). But for great, imaginative impressions :—

' Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks branch-charmèd by the earnest stars ' :—

you turn to other books than his.

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all the contumely of which his 'Carrick lips' were capable, to wear. Nothing has exercised their ingenuity, their talent for chronology, their capacity for invention (even), so vigorously as the task of squaring their theory of Burns with the story of his marriage and the legend of his Highland Lassie. Now is the moment to deal with both.

Elizabeth Paton's child was born in the November of 1784. In the April of that year, a few weeks after the general settlement at Mossgiel, he made the acquaintance of Armour the mason's daughter, Jean. She was a handsome, lively girl; the acquaintance ripened into love on both sides; and in the end, after what dates approve a prolonged and serious courtship, Armour fell with child. Her condition being discovered, Burns, after some strong revulsions of feeling against—not Jean, I hope, but—the estate of marriage, gave her what he presently had every reason to call 'an unlucky paper,' recognising her as his wife; and, had things been allowed to drift in the usual way, the world had lacked an unforgotten scandal, and a great deal of silly writing. This, though, was not to be. Old Armour—('a bit mason body, who used to snuff a guid deal, and gey af'en tak' a bit dram')—is said to have 'hated' Burns: so that he would 'reyther hae seen the Deil himsel' comin' to the hoose to coort his dochter than him.' Thus a contemporary of both Armour and Burns; and in any case Armour knew Burns for a needy and reckless man, the father of one by-blow, a rebel at odds with the Orthodox, of whom, in existing circumstances, it would be vain to ask a comfortable living. So he first obliged Jean to

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give up the 'unlucky paper,' with a view to un-making any engagement it might confirm,¹ and then sent her to Paisley, to be out of her lover's way. In the meanwhile Burns himself was in straits, and had half-a-dozen designs in hand at once. Moss-giel was a failure; he had resolved to deport himself to the West Indies; he had made up his mind to print, and the Kilmarnock Edition was setting, when Jean was sent into exile. Worst of all, he seems to have been not very sure whether he loved or not. When he knew that he and she had not eluded the Inevitable, he wrote to James Smith that 'against two things—staying at home and owning her conjugally'—he was 'fixed as fate.' 'The first,' he says, 'by heaven I will not do!' Then, in a burst of Don-Juanism—Don-Juanism of the kind that protests too much to be real—'the last, by hell I will never do.' Follows a gush of sentimentalism (to Smith), which is part nerves and part an attempt—as the run on the *g*'s and the *w*'s shows—at literature:—'A good God bless you, and make you happy, up to the warmest weeping wish of parting friendship.' And this is succeeded by a message to the poor, pregnant creature, of whom, but two lines before, he has sworn 'by hell' that he will never make her honest:—'If you see Jean, tell

A burst of
Don-
Juanism.

¹ I take it that the paper was 'unlucky,' because it became a weapon in old Armour's hands, and was the means of inflicting on the writer the worst and the most painful experience of his life. At the same time there seems to be no doubt that it made Jean Mrs. Burns, so that, consciously or not, Auld (who probably had a strong objection to the marriage) was guilty of an illegal act in certifying Burns a bachelor. Burns, in fact, was completely justified in his anger with the Kirk and in the scorn with which he visited the tyranny of her ministers.

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her I will meet her, so help me God in my hour of need.' This scrap is undated, but it must have been written before 17th February 1786, when he wrote thus to Richmond:—'I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have *now* in Mauchline.' Well, he *does* meet Jean; and, his better nature getting the upper hand, the 'unlucky paper' is written. Then on the 20th March he writes thus to Muir:—'I intend to have a gill between us or a mutchkin stoup,' for the reason that it 'will be a *great comfort and consolation*':—which seems to show that Jean had repudiated him some time between the two letters. Before the 2nd April, on which day the Kirk-Session takes cognisance of the matter, Jean has gone to Paisley; the 'unlucky paper' is cancelled (apparently about the 14th April, the names were cut out with a pen-knife); so that Don Juan finds himself *planté-là*, and being not really Don Juan—(as what sentimentalist could be?)—he does not affect Don Juan any more. The prey has turned upon the hunter; the deserter becomes the deserted, the privilege of repudiation, 'by hell' or otherwise, has passed to the other side. The man's pride, inordinate for a peasant, is cut to the quick; and his unrivalled capacity for 'battering himself into an affection' or a mood has a really notable opportunity for display. In love before, he is ten times more in love than ever; he feels his loss to desperation; he becomes the disappointed lover—even the true-souled, generous adoring victim of a jilt:—

' A jillet brak his heart at last
That's owre the sea.'

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*The
Lament.*

*and De-
spondency.*

In effect, his position was sufficiently distracting. He had made oath that he would *not* marry Jean ; then he had practically married her ; then he found that nobody wanted her married to him—that, on the contrary, he was the most absolute ‘detrimental’ in all Ayrshire ; when, of course, the marriage became the one thing that made his life worth living. He tried to persuade old Armour to think better of his resolve ; and, failing, ran ‘nine parts and nine tenths out of ten stark staring mad.’ Also he wrote the *Lament*, in which he told his sorrows to the moon¹ (duly addressing that satellite as ‘O thou pale Orb’), and took her publicly into his confidence, in the beautiful language of Eighteenth Century English Poetry, and painted what is in the circumstances a really creditable picture of the effects upon a simple Bard of ‘a faithless woman’s broken vow.’ Further he produced *Despondency* in the same elegant lingo ; and, in *Despondency*, having called for ‘the closing tomb,’ and pleasingly praised ‘the Solitary’s lot,’—

‘ Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot
Within his humble cell—
The cavern, wild with tangling roots—
Sits o’er his newly gathered fruits,
Beside his crystal well ! ’ *etc.*—

he addressed himself to Youth and Infancy in these affecting terms :—

‘ O enviable early days,
When dancing thoughtless Pleasure’s maze,
To care, to guilt unknown !

¹ Is it worth noting that, later, when he comes to sing of Mary Campbell, his confidant is no longer the Moon but the Morning Star ?

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How ill exchange'd for riper times,
 To feel the follies or the crimes
 Of others, or my own !
 Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
 Like linnets in the bush,
 Ye little know the ills ye court,
 When manhood is your wish !
 The losses, the crosses
 That active man engage ;
 The fears all, the tears all
 Of dim declining Age !' ¹

Moreover, he took occasion to refer to Jean (to David Brice ; 12th June 1786) as 'poor, ill-advised, ungrateful Armour' ; vowed that he could 'have 'Ungrateful Armour.' no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment' than 'what I have felt in my own breast on her account' ; and finally confessed himself to this purpose :—'I have often tried to forget her : I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riot . . . to drive her out of my head, but all in vain.' Long before this, however—as early, it would seem, as some time in March—his 'maddening passions,

¹ I cannot attach any great importance to these exercises in Poetic English. Burns wrote to a very different purpose when he wrote from his heart and in his native tongue :—

' Had we never loved sae kindly . . .'
 ' Of a' the airts the wind can blow
 I dearly like the west' :—

and so on, and so on. Still, there can be no doubt that they mean something. At any rate they are designed to be impressive and 'fine' ; and probably the Bard believed in them to the extent to which he was satisfied with his achievement in what must certainly have seemed to him real poetry. None of your Vernacular (that is), but downright, solid unmistakable English Verse : verse which might stand beside the works of Beattie and Shenstone and Thomson and the 'elegantly melting Gray.' That life departed them long since is plain. But it is just as plain that they meant something to Burns, for (apparently) he took much pains with them, saw not their humorous aspect, and included them in his first (Kilmarnock) Volume,

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roused to tenfold fury,' having done all sorts of dreadful things, and then 'sunk into a lurid calm,' he had 'subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower,' and had lifted his 'grief-worn eye to look for—another wife.' In other words, he had pined for female society, and had embarked upon those famous love-passages with Highland Mary.

Mary
Campbell.

Little that is positive is known of Mary Campbell except that she once possessed a copy of the Scriptures (now very piously preserved at Ayr), and that she is the subject of a fantasy, in bronze, at Dunoon. But to consider her story is, almost inevitably, to be forced back upon one of two conclusions:—either (1) she was something of a lightskirts; or (2) she is a kind of Scottish Mrs. Harris. The theory in general acceptance—what is called the Episode Theory—is that she was 'an innocent and gentle Highland nursery-maid' (thus, after Chambers, R. L. S.) 'in the service of a neighbouring family' (Gavin Hamilton's); that she consoled Burns—*mais pour le bon motif*—for Jean's desertion; that they agreed to marry; that, on her departure for the West to prepare for the event, 'Ayr, gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,' and they exchanged vows and Bibles; and that she died, of a malignant fever, some few months after her return to Greenock.

Conflicting
theories.

Another identifies her (on Richmond's authority) with a serving-maid in Mauchline, who was the mistress of a Montgomerie, and had withal such a hold upon Burns that for a brief while he was crazy to make her his wife; and some have thought that this may be the Mary Campbell who, according to

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the Dundonald Session Records, fathered a child on one John Hay. This last hypothesis is, of course, most hateful to the puzzle-headed puritans who cannot, or will not, believe, despite the fact that the world has always teemed with Antonies, each of them mad for his peculiar Cleopatra, that Burns, particularly in his present straits, might very well have been enamoured of a gay girl to the point of marriage. So, for the consolation of these, there has been devised a third, according to which her name was either Mary Campbell or something unknown; but, whatever she was called, she was so far and away the purest and sweetest of her sex—the one ‘white rose,’ in fact, which grew up among the ‘passion flowers’ of the Bard’s career—that she must, had she married him, have entirely ‘rectified’ his character, and have transformed him into a pattern Kirk-of-Scotland puritan of the puritans. On the other hand, it has become obvious to some whole-hearted devotees of the Marian Ideal that a ‘young person’ of this sort could scarce have been of so coming a habit as to skip with alacrity into Jean’s old shoes, and—shutting her innocent eyes to the fact that Burns, a man notoriously at war with the Kirk and the seducer of two unmarried women, was at the same time at his wits’ end for cash—consent to cast in her lot with his at a moment’s notice, and with never a sign from the family she was to enter. If she could do that, plainly she could not, except on strong positive testimony, be made to do duty as a white rose among passion-flowers; or if, on some unknown and inenarrable hypothesis, she could, then, says

A white rose
among
passion-
flowers.

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A creature of
the brain.

one of the devout, 'the conduct of Burns was that of a scoundrel.' This is absurd! So of late (1896-97) there has come into being a wish to believe that either Mary Campbell preceded Armour in the Bard's affections, or the Highland Lassie never existed at all, but was a creature of Burns's brain: an ideal of womanhood to which his thought ascended from the mire of this world—the world of Ellisland, and Jean, and the children, and the songs in Johnson's *Museum*)—as Dante's to his Beatrice of dream. Given Burns's own habit and the habit of the Scots peasant woman, there is still no earthly reason for rejecting the Episode Theory—even were rejection possible—however seriously it reflect upon the morals of the parties concerned. But it is fair to add that the subject is both complicated and obscure. Burns's own references to his Highland Lassie are deliberately insignificant and vague: for once in his life he was reticent. His statement that she went home to prepare for their marriage is heavily discounted by the fact that he did not introduce her to his family as his betrothed, in nowise prepared for marriage on his own account, never dreamed, except in sporadic copies of verse, of taking her to the West Indies, and was all the while so desperately enamoured of Jean that not by any amount of self-indulgence could he rid his breast of her: by the fact, too, that, if his thought went back to the Highland Lassie in after years, his report of the journey is strongly tinged with remorse.¹ Currie's statement is that 'the banks of

¹ He sent *Thou Ling'ring Star* to Mrs. Dunlop in a letter dated 8th November 1789. In acknowledging it, the lady

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Ayr formed the scene of youthful passions . . . the history of which it would be improper to reveal,' etc. Gilbert Burns, after noting that Nanie Fleming's charms were 'sexual'—'which indeed was the characteristic of the greater part of his (Robert's) mistresses'—is careful, perhaps with an eye on the heroine of *Thou Ling'ring Star*, to record the statement that Robert, at least, 'was no platonic lover, whatever he might pretend or suppose of himself to the contrary.' There is Richmond's statement, as reported by Train. There is the Mary Campbell of the Dundonald Register. There is the certainty that relations there were between Burns and a Mary Campbell. There is the strong probability that Mary Campbell and the Highland Lassie were one and the same person. There is Burns's own witness to the circumstance that they met and parted under extremely suspicious conditions. That, really, is all. Yet, on the strength of a romantic impulse on the part of Robert Chambers, the heroine-in-chief of Burns's story is not the loyal and patient soul whom he appreciated as the fittest to be his wife he'd ever met: not the Jean who endured his affronts, and mothered his children (her own and another's), and took the rough and the smooth, the best and the worst of life with him, and wore his name for well-nigh forty years after his death as her sole title to regard. On the contrary, that heroine-in-chief is a girl of whom scarce anything definite is known, while what may be noted its remorseful cast, and hoped it didn't set forth a personal experience. There is nothing to show that he gave her any particulars, or essayed to disabuse her of the idea that remorse there well might be.

The heroine-in-chief.

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reasonably suspected of her, though natural and feminine enough, is so displeasing to some fanatics, that, for Burns's sake (not hers) they would like to mythologise her out of being ; or, at the least, to make her as arrant an impossibility as the tame, proper figmentary Burns, the coinage of their own tame, proper brains, which they have done their best to substitute for the lewd, amazing peasant of genius,¹ the inspired faun, whose voice has gone ringing through the courts of Time these hundred years and more, and is far louder and far clearer now than when it first broke on the ear of man.

Stevenson was an acute and delicate critic at many points: but he wrote like a novelist—like Thackeray, say, of Fielding and Sterne—when he wrote of Armour as a 'facile and empty-headed girl,' and insisted, still possessed by Chambers's vain imaginings, that she was first and last in love with another man. In truth the facility was on the other side. In 1784 Burns is willing to marry Betty Paton, and writes thus to Thomas Orr:—'I am very glad Peggy [Thomson] is off my hand, as I am at present embarrassed enough without her.' In 1785 he is courting Jean Armour, and very early in 1786 Jean is in the family way, and 'by hell' she shall never be his wife. But some time in March Jean is sent to Paisley; and the 'maddening passions,' *etc.*, set to work; and he can no more 'se consoler de son départ' than Calypso could for that of Ulysses. So in a hand's turn he becomes the stricken deer, and, as we have seen, protests (to the Moon) that to marry Jean, and wear 'The promised

¹ 'Peculiarly like nobody else' (R. B. to Arnot, April 1786).

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father's tender name' are his sole ambitions. As Jean does not return, however, he seeks (and finds) such comfort as he may in exchanging vows and Bibles and what Chamfort called 'fantaisies' with Mary Campbell. On the 12th-13th May he writes *The Court of Equity*—a task the strangest conceivable for a lover, whether rejoicing or distraught. *The Court of Equity.* On the 14th 'Ayr gurgling kisses his pebbled shore,' and 'The flowers spring wanton to be pressed,' and Highland Mary leaves for the West to make these famous preparations. On the 15th May he dates (at least) the *Epistle to a Young Friend*:—

'The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love
Luxuriantly indulge it,' etc. :—

and, as for some time past, he is still the gallant, howbeit in jest, of Betty Miller: till on the 9th June 'poor ill-advised Armour' returns to Mauchline; and on the 12th he writes that 'for all her part in a certain black affair' he 'still loves her to distraction,' and, with a view to forgetting her has 'run into all kinds of dissipation and riot . . . but in vain.' On the 28th June he appears before 'the Poacher Court,' acknowledges paternity, and is 'promised a certificate as a single man'; on condition that he do penance before the congregation on three successive Sundays. On the 9th July, the occasion of his first appearance, he has 'a foolish hankering fondness' for Jean, but, calling on her and being put to the door, he remarks that she does not 'show that penitence that might have been expected'; so, on the 22nd, he executes a deed by

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A panorama
of tumult.

which he makes over all his property to the 'wee image of his bonie Betty,' to the exclusion of whatever might come of his affair with the recusant. Then, on the 30th (old Armour having, meanwhile, got a warrant against him, and sent him into hiding¹), he adjures Richmond—(who, he knows, will 'pour an execration' on Jean's head)—to 'spare the poor, ill-advised girl for my sake'; and on the 14th August he calls on Heaven to 'bless the Sex,' for that 'I feel there is still happiness for me among them.' Against this panorama of tumult and variety and adventure, enlarged in Edinburgh, and enriched at Ellisland and in Dumfries, there are to set the years of simple abnegation, magnanimity, and devotion with which the 'facile and empty-headed girl' repaid the husband of her choice. The conclusion is obvious. The Novelist turned Critic is still the Novelist. Consciously or not, he develops preferences, for, consciously or not, he must still create.'² Stevenson's preferences were with Rab Mossgiel. And the result was a grave—but not, I hope, a lasting—injustice to an excellent and very womanly woman and a model wife.³

¹ No doubt he retired on information sent by Jean.

² Thus Stevenson, who himself liked 'dressing a part' (so to speak), was persuaded that Burns did likewise, and accepted bodily that absurd, fantastic story (told by two Englishmen), in which the Bard, in a fox-skin cap and an enormous coat, and girt with a Highland broadsword, is seen angling from a Nithside rock. Jean denied it, and said that Robert (who hated field-sports, as we know) never angled in his life. But the Novelist was roused; and all that was ignored.

³ On the 3rd September Jean lay in of twins. They were presently taken by their respective grandmothers, to whom, I doubt not, they gave great joy: as in that and other stages of society the appearance of the third generation, whether its

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As to Highland Mary, one of two conclusions :
(1) Either she was a paragon ; or (2) she was not.
In the first case, her story has yet to be written, and
written on evidence that is positive and irrefutable.
In the second, the bronze at Dunoon bears abiding
witness to the existence (at a certain time) of what
can only be described as a national delusion.

VI

By this time the end of Mauchline, and of much
besides, was nearer than Burns knew. Probably
sent to press in the May of 1786, the Kilmarnock
Volume was published at the end of July.¹ Most

The
Kilmarnock
Volume.

right to exist be legal or not, does always. Burns announced
the event as only Burns could, by sending *Nature's Law* :—

‘ Kind Nature’s care had given him share

Large of the flaming current,’ *etc.* :—

to Gavin Hamilton ; a ‘ God bless the little dears,’ with a
snatch of indecent song, to Richmond ; and a really heartfelt and
affecting bit of prose on the subject of paternity to Robert Muir.

¹ One effect of its publication was to secure him the friend-
ship of Mrs. Dunlop. It is evident from this lady’s letters
that her interest in him could scarce have been warmer had
he been her son. She prized his correspondence as beyond
rubies, and as a rule he was slower to reply than she (once,
being hurt by his silence, she told him she wouldn’t write
again till he asked her, and, failing to draw him, within a week
she is found begging his pardon for her petulance). She made
him many gifts—apparently in money and in kind—gifts at
New Year and other times, and accepted gifts from him (once
he sent her a keg of old brandy). Her influence made ever
for decency, and it may well have been on her remonstrances,
which were strong, that he finally resolved to remove some of
the coarser phrases in his earlier editions. Her last (extant)
letter is dated 11th January 1795. For some unexplained
reasons she ceased from writing several months before the
January of 1796. It may have been that she heard of him as
often in drink, or that she was told of the affair at Woodley
Park. In any case she esteemed him so highly, and admired
him so lavishly, that ’tis quite impossible to believe the breach
in the correspondence due to any fault of hers.

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of, if not all, the numbers contained in it were probably familiar to the countryside. Some had certainly been received with 'a roar of applause'; Burns, who was not a man to hide his light under a bushel (his temperament was too radiant and too vigorous for that), was given to multiplying his verses in MS. copies for friends; he had been 'read into fame' by Aiken the lawyer: so that *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* was, in a sense, as Its triumph. 'well advertised' as book could be. Its triumph was not less instant than well-deserved:¹ the first issue, six hundred copies strong, was exhausted in a month ('tis said that not one could be spared for Moss-giel). But Burns himself, according to himself, and he was ever punctiliously exact and scrupulous on the score of money, was but £20 in pocket by it; the Kilmarnock printer declined to strike off a second impression, with additions, unless he got the price of the paper (£27) in advance; and for some time it seemed that there was nothing but Jamaica for the writer, Local Bard and Local Hero though he were: so that he looked to have sailed in mid-August, and again on the 1st September, and at some indeterminate date had 'conveyed his chest thus far on the road to Greenock,' and written that solemn and moving song—far and away the best, I think, and the sincerest thing he left in English—

¹ 'Old and young,' says Heron, 'high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, all were alike delighted, agitated, transported. I was at that time resident in Galloway, contiguous to Ayrshire: and I can well remember, how that even the plough-boys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages which they earned the most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but secure the works of Burns.'

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The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast. It was to be the 'last effort' of his 'Muse in Caledonia.' But, for one or another reason, his departure was ever deferred ; and, though on the 30th October (some ten days, it is surmised, after the death of Mary Campbell), he was still writing that 'ance to the Indies he was wonted,' he'd certainly contrive to 'mak' the best o' life Wi' some sweet elf,' on the 18th November, 'I am thinking for my Edinburgh expedition on Monday or Tuesday come s'ennight.' An 'Edinburgh expedition.' In effect, an 'Edinburgh expedition' was natural and inevitable. Ballantine of Ayr is said to have suggested the idea of such an adventure ; Gilbert and the family are said to have applauded it. But as early as the 4th September the excellent Blacklock —(in 'a letter to a friend of mine which overthrew all my schemes')—had called—'for the sake of the young man'—for a second edition, 'more numerous than the former': inasmuch as 'it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertions of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published within my memory.' Thus Blacklock ; and the 'friend of mine,' which was Lawrie, the minister of Loudoun, had communicated Blacklock's letter to the person most concerned in Blacklock's suggestion. Bold, proud, intelligent *au possible*, strongly possessed too (so he says, and so I believe) by the genius of paternity, Burns the Man, who had a very becoming opinion of Burns the Bard, and could fairly appreciate that worthy's merits, must certainly have seen that in Edinburgh he had many chances of succeeding at the very point

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where the Kilmarnock printer failed him. I do not doubt, either, that he was tired of being the Local Poet, the Local Satirist, the Local Wit, the Local Lothario (even), and eager to essay himself on another and a vaster stage than Mauchline; for, if he hadn't been thus tired and thus eager, he wouldn't have been Robert Burns. The fighting spirit, the genius of emulation, is so strong in us all that a man of temperament and brains must assert himself, and get accepted at his own (or another) valuation, exactly as a cock must crow. And I love to believe that Burns, being immitigably of this metal, entered upon his adventure—(27th November: on a borrowed nag, with not much money, a letter of introduction to Dalrymple of Orangefield, and a visiting list consisting entirely in Dugald Stewart and Richmond the lawyer's clerk)—with a joyous heart and the stiff neck of one who knows himself a man among men, and whose chief ambition is to 'drink delight of battle with his peers'—if he can find them.

His
reception.

He reached the capital on the 28th November, and was hospitably entertained by Richmond—to the extent, indeed, of a bedfellow's share in the clerk's one little room in Baxter's Place, Lawnmarket. Through Dalrymple of Orangefield he got access to Lord Glencairn and others; among them Harry Erskine, Dean of Faculty, and that curious, irascible, pompous ass, the Earl of Buchan, and Creech the publisher, who had been Glencairn's tutor, and who advertised the Edinburgh Edition on the 14th December. He was everywhere received as he merited, and he made such admirable

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use of his vogue that, five days before Creech's advertisement was printed, he could tell his friend and patron, Gavin Hamilton, that he was rapidly qualifying for the position of Tenth Worthy and Eighth Wise Man of the World. He saw everybody worth seeing, and talked with everybody worth talking to; he was made welcome by 'heavenly Burnett' and her frolic Grace of Gordon, and welcome by the ribald, scholarly, hard-drinking wits and jinkers of the Crochallan Fencibles, for whose use and edification he had made the unique and precious collection now called *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*; he moved and bore himself as easily at Dugald Stewart's as in Baxter's Place, in Creech's shop, with Henry Mackenzie and Gregory and Blair, as at that extraordinary meeting of the St. Andrew's Lodge, where, at the Grand Master's bidding, the Brethren assembled drank the health of 'Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard—Brother Burns': a toast received with 'multiplied honours and repeated acclamations.' To look at, 'he was like a farmer dressed to dine with the laird': his manners were 'rustic, not clownish'; he had 'a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity.' Then, 'his address to females was always extremely deferential, and always'—this on the authority of the Duchess of Gordon—'with a turn to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly.' For the rest, 'I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment.' Thus, long afterwards, Sir Walter, who noted also, boy as he

His
dignified
simplicity.

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was, 'the strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments,' and who, long afterwards, had never seen such an eye as Burns's 'in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men'—(Byron among them ; and Byron's eye was one of Byron's points)—'of my time.' It is not wonderful, perhaps, that Burns, with his abounding temperament, his puissant charm, his potency in talk, his rare gifts of eye and voice,¹ should have strongly affected Edinburgh Society, brilliant in its elements and distinguished in its effect as it was. There has been no Burns since Burns ; or history would pretty certainly have repeated itself. What is really wonderful is the way in which Burns kept his head in Edinburgh Society, and stood prepared for the inevitable reaction. Through all the 'thick, strong, stupefying incense smoke' (and there was certainly a great deal of it), he held a steady eye upon his future. He saw most clearly that the life of a nine-days' wonder is at most nine days, and that now was his time or never. But if he expected preferment, he was neither extravagantly elated in anticipation, nor unduly depressed by disappointment ; and, for all his self-consciousness—('And God had given his share')—he was not too platonic to disdain the favours of at least one servant-girl (he was arrested, August 1787, on a warrant *In meditatione fugæ*), nor too punctilious to make love to 'a Lothian farmer's daughter, a very pretty girl,

The reaction.

¹ Thus Maria Riddell :—'His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye. Sonorous, replete with the finest modulations,' *etc.* It will be remembered that children used to speak of Byron as 'the gentleman with the beautiful voice.'

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whom I've almost persuaded to accompany me to the West Country should I ever return,' *etc.*, nor too philosophical not to regret his Jean, and reflect (in this very letter to Gavin Hamilton) that he'd never 'meet so delicious an armful again.'

In the long-run his magnanimity suffered a certain change. The peasant at work scarce ever goes wrong; but abroad and idle he is easily spoiled, and soon. Edinburgh was a triumph for Burns; but it was also a misfortune. It was a centre of conviviality—a city of clubs and talk and good fellowship, a city of harlotry and high jinks, a city (above all) of drink:—

'Whare couthy chiels at e'enin meet,
Their bizzin craigs and mou's to weet :
An' blythely gar auld Care gae by
Wi' blinket and wi' bleering eye':—

a dangerous place for a peasant to be at large in, especially a peasant of the conditions and the stamp of Burns. He was young, he was buckishly given, and he was—Burns. He had, as certain numbers in *The Merry Muses* witness, an entirely admirable talent of a kind much favoured by our liberal ancestors. To hear him talk was ever a privilege; while to hear him make such use as he might of this peculiar capacity cannot but have constituted a unique experience. After all, a gift's a gift, and a man must use the gifts he has. No reasonable being can question that Burns used this one of his.¹

¹ This is noted neither in praise nor in dispraise. It is noted to show that Burns was essentially a man of his time: as how, peasant of genius that he was, could he be anything else? Our fathers loved sculduddery, and Burns, who came

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In those days he could scarce be buckish—or even popular and do other. Even in the country, says Heron, in his loose yet lofty way, ‘the votaries of intemperate joys, with persons to whom he was recommended by licentious wit . . . had begun to fasten on him, and to seduce him to embellish the gross pleasures of their looser hours with the charms of his wit and fancy.’ These temptations—(he was known, be it remembered, for the ribald of *The Fornicator* and *The Court of Equity* as well as for the poet of the *Mountain Daisy* and the *Saturday Night*)—he was by no means incapable of putting by. Mr. Arthur Bruce, indeed, ‘a gentleman of great worth and discernment,’ assured Heron that he had ‘seen the poet steadily resist such sollicita-

The bucks of
the capital.

from Carrick—where, as Lockhart has remarked, the Vernacular was spoken with peculiar gaiety and vigour—was the best gifted of them all in this respect by virtue of his genius, his turn of mind, his peasanthood, and his wonderful capacity for talk. Josiah Walker notes of Burns that his conversation was ‘not more licentious’ than the conversation heard at the tables of the great; Lockhart regrets that he can give but few of Burns’s *mots*, for the reason that the most of those preserved and handed down were unquotable. It was a trick of the time, and long after—(remember Colonel Newcome’s indignant retreat before old Costigan)—so that Lord Cork of *The Bumper Toast*, and Captain Morris at Carlton House and Burns among the Crochallan Fencibles are but expressions of the same fashion in humour, the same tendency in the human mind to apprehend and rejoice in the farce of sex. I do not know that Burns and M’Queen of Braxfield (Stevenson’s Weir of Hermiston) ever met. But it was said of M’Queen that he had never read anything but sculduddery and law; and to Ramsay of Auchtertyre, in whom Sir Walter found some elements of Monkbarons, the two men seemed cast in the same mould. Burns, in any case, was a man of the later Eighteenth Century (he sent one of his best known *facetiæ* to Graham of Fintry, with a view to correcting some illiberal report about his politics); and to take him out of it, and essay to make him a smug, decent, Late-Victorian journalist is, as I think, to essay a task at once discreditable in aim and impossible of execution.

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tions and allurements to convivial enjoyment, as scarcely any other person could have withstood.' But—thus this author: intelligent, not unfriendly on the whole, on the whole competent—'the bucks of Edinburgh accomplished . . . that in which the boors of Ayrshire ¹ had failed. After residing some months in Edinburgh he began to estrange himself, not altogether, but in some measure, from the society of his graver friends. . . . He *suffered* himself to be surrounded by a race of miserable beings who were proud to tell that they had been in company with Burns, and had seen Burns as loose and as foolish as themselves.'² One result of this condescension was this: always the best man in the room, 'the cock of the company,' as Heron puts it, 'The cock of the company.'³ 'he began to contract something of new arrogance in conversation'; till in the long-run 'he could scarcely refrain from indulging in similar freedom and dictatorial decision of talk, even in the presence of persons³ who could less patiently endure his presumption.' Heron's detail is vague—not to say indefinite; his effect may be misleading. But, as I said, the peasant at large—the peasant without hard work to keep him straight—must, almost of necessity, run to waste. And it is plain that, tread-

¹ This appears to be a polite description, by a staunch (though drunken) Churchman, of those desperate spirits, Gavin Hamilton and Robert Aiken.

² I give all this for what it is worth. Heron himself was something of a wastrel. Yet he had a clerical habit and a clerical bias which made him easily censorious in the case of so hardened and so militant an anti-cleric as the Bard. He was personally acquainted, however, with that hero; and his little biography (1797) is neither unintelligent nor ill-written.

³ Heron himself, no doubt. He 'had the tongues,' and thought himself the better man.

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ing thus closely on the heels of 'the dissipation and riot,' the 'mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief,' of the year before, the distractions and the triumphs of Edinburgh continued the work which the mistakes and follies of Dumfries were to finish ten years after.

The First
Edinburgh
Edition.

At last, however, the First Edinburgh Edition appeared (21st April 1787). The issue ran to 2800 copies, and 1500 of these were subscribed in advance. What Burns got for it is matter of doubt. Creech informed Heron that it was £1100—which is a plain untruth; Chambers says £500; Burns himself told Mrs. Dunlop (25th March 1789) that he expected to clear some £440 to £450. (Other impressions were called for in the course of the year, but the Bard had sold his copyright, and had no interest in them.) Whatever the amount,¹ Creech was a slow paymaster; and, as Edinburgh was bad for Burns, and Creech was responsible for Burns's detention in Edinburgh, it is impossible not to regret that Burns had not another publisher.

¹ At the instancing of Henry Mackenzie, Creech paid Burns (23rd April 1787) a hundred guineas for the copyright of the *Poems*, besides subscribing five hundred copies. The Caledonian Hunt subscribed another hundred; and Burns sent seventy to Ballantine for 'a proper person' in Ayr, and wrote from Dunse (17th May) to acknowledge the receipt, from Pattison, the Paisley bookseller, of 'Twenty-two pounds, seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted for ninety copies' more. Twenty-four copies went to the Earl and Countess of Glencairn, twenty to Prentice of Conington Mains, forty to Muir of Kilmarnock, twenty-one to Her Grace of Gordon, forty-two to the Earl of Eglintoun and a certain number to the Scots Benedictionaries at Maryborough and Ratisbon, and the Scots Colleges at Douay, Paris, and Valladolid. The subscription price was five, the price to non-subscribers six, shillings: the extra shilling being (Burns to Pattison, *ut sup.*) 'Creech's profit.'

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Burns in effect, his Second Edition once published, had nothing to do but pocket his receipts,¹ and be gone. This, however, was what Creech could not let him do : so that he went and came, and came and went, and it was not until the March of 1789 that the two men squared accounts.²

The Edition floated, comes a jaunt to the Border (begun 5th May) with Robert Ainslie. Then, by the 9th June, Burns is back at Mauchline, a much richer and a vastly more important person than he left it : able to lend his brother £180 ; reconciled, too, with Jean and her people, but disgusted, or feigning himself disgusted (for, after the repudiation, he is ever the superior and the injured party in

The return to
Mauchline.

¹ Heron 'had reason to believe that he had consumed a much larger proportion of these gains than prudence could approve ; while he superintended the impression, paid his court to his patrons, and wasted the full payment of the subscription money.' In effect, it is hard to see how, coming to Edinburgh with next to nothing in his pocket (the £20 from Wilson could not have gone very far), he could otherwise have lived. It would have been natural enough for him to have accepted gratuities, for the Age of Patronage was still afoot, and relief in this kind would have come as easily (to say the least) to the 'ploughing poet,' howbeit he was the proudest and in some respects the most punctilious of men, as to any other. I find it hard to believe that there were none. But there is no record of any ; and a letter (unpublished) of this period in acknowledgment of a gift of money from Mrs. Dunlop is almost painful in its embarrassment of gratitude and discomfort. On the whole, I take it that, however cheaply he lived in Edinburgh, he must of necessity have had to discount his profits, though not to anything like the extent suggested by Heron. Moreover, it is like enough that he spent a certain amount upon his Tours, and it is certain that Mossiel was a dead loss to him.

² Of the work he did about this time the best is to be found in the *Haggis* and the *Epistles* to Creech and the Guidwife of Wauchope House. What is very much more to the purpose is that he made Johnson's acquaintance, and at once began contributing to the *Musical Museum*.

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regard to Jean), with the 'mean, servile compliance' with which his advances are met. Follows a tour to the West Highlands, which seems to be largely an occasion for drink and talk; and in July you find him back at Mauchline, boasting how he, 'an old hawk at the sport,' has brought 'a certain lady'—(unknown)—'from her aerial towerings, pop, down at my foot, like Corporal Trim's hat'; despite which Jean is presently with child by him for the second time. In August he is at Edinburgh, intent on a settlement with Creech, but on the 25th he starts for the Highland tour with his friend Nicol.¹ After a couple of excursions more—one to Ayrshire, to look at certain holdings—he is resolved on quitting Edinburgh, settlement or no settlement, to farm or go to the Indies, as circumstances shall dictate. But it is written that his life shall have another disputable episode and the world an immortal scrap of song:—

' Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,

¹ Heron describes Nicol as a man who 'in vigour of intellect, and in wild yet generous impetuosity of passion, remarkably resembled . . . Burns'; who 'by the most unwearied and extraordinary professional toil, in the midst of as persevering dissipation . . . won and accumulated an honourable and sufficient competence'; and who died of 'a jaundice, with a complication of other complaints, the effects of long-continued intemperance.' Burns admired Nicol, named a son after him, and immortalised him as the 'Willie' who 'brew'd a peck o' maut.' He had a generous heart and a brutal temper, with plenty of brains, a great contempt for custom and the Kirk, and what Lockhart calls 'a rapturous admiration of Burns's genius.' The violent vulgarity of his behaviour at Castle Gordon is typical of the man. He bought a little property not far from Ellisland, and, what with pride and vanity and republican independence (so called) and an immitigable turn for liquor, was certainly as bad a neighbour as the Bard could possibly have had.

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Never met or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.'

So in the beginning of December he falls in with Mrs. M'Lehose ; he instantly proposes to 'cultivate her friendship with the enthusiasm of religion' ; and the two are languishing in Arcady in the twinkling of a cupid's wing.

She was a handsome, womanly creature—'of a ^{Clarinda and Sylvander.} somewhat voluptuous style of beauty' : a style the Bard appreciated—lively but devout, extremely sentimental yet inexorably dutiful : a grass widow with children—nine times in ten a lasting safeguard—and the strictest notions of propriety—a good enough defence for a time ; but young (she was the Bard's own age), clever, 'of a poetical fabric of mind,' and all the rest. The upsetting of a hackney coach disabled Burns from calling on her for some weeks. But he wrote her letters, and she answered them ; and he was Sylvander, and she signed herself Clarinda ; and they addressed each other in verse as well as prose ; and she said it could never be ; and he said that at least he must know her heart was his ; and Religion was her 'balm in every woe' ; and he gave her his ideas of Deity ; and, when they could meet, Clarinda was ever afraid lest she had let Sylvander go too far ; and Sylvander, for his part, was monstrous eloquent about 'Almighty Love'—(he was sometimes dreadfully like his favourite Man of Feeling)—and was 'ready to hang himself' about 'a young Edinburgh widow.' Widow she was not ; but her husband, who cared not a snap of the fingers for her, was away in the West Indies ; and it may perhaps have suited her lover—who

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never, so far as is known, was trained to the compromises and the obsequencies of adultery—to soothe his conscience by making believe that the affair was at the most a simple everyday amour. Clarinda was of another make. In the prime of life, deserted, sentimental, a tangle of simple instincts and as simple pieties, she had the natural woman's desire for a lover and the religious woman's resolve to keep that lover's passion within bounds. It is scarce questioned that she succeeded: though there is a legend that a certain gallant and insinuating little lyric:—

' O May, thy morn was ne'er sae sweet
As the mirk night o' December,
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And secret was the chamber!
And dear was she I winna name
But I will aye remember! '—

commemorates, not only their final meeting (December 6th, 1791) but also, the triumph of the Bard.¹ In any event she was plainly an excellent creature, bent on keeping herself honest and her

¹ Both *As Fond Kiss* and *O May, Thy Morn* were sent to Clarinda after the final parting; but the legend is all-too obviously an effect of the very common human sentiment in deference to which so many novels end happily. For the rest, Sir Walter Scott wrote thus on the fly-leaf of a copy of the very scarce Belfast Edition (1806) of the *Letters Addressed to Clarinda by Robert Burns*, now at Abbotsford:—'Clarinda was a Mrs. Meiklehose, wife of a person in the West Indies, from whom she lived separate but without any blemish, I believe, on her reputation. I don't wonder that the Bard changed her 'thrice unhappy name' for the classical sound of Clarinda. She was a relative of my friend the late Lord Craig, at whose house I have seen her, old, charmless and *devote*. There was no scandal attached to her philandering with the Bard, though the Lady ran risques, for Burns was anything but platonic in his amours,' etc.

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lover straight; and it is impossible to read her letters to Sylvander without a respect, a certain Their letters. admiration even, which have never been awakened yet by the study of Sylvander's letters to her. For Sylvander's point of view, as M^cLehose was still alive, and an open intrigue with a married woman would have been ruin, only one inference is possible: that he longed for the shepherd's hour to strike for the chime's sake only; so that, when he thought of his future, as he must have done anxiously and often, he cannot ever have thought of it as Clarinda's, even though in a moment of peculiar exaltation, he swore to keep single till that wretch, the wicked husband, died.¹

Very early in 1788, Jean—brought, she also, some time in the preceding summer 'pop, down at my feet, like Corporal Trim's hat'—was expelled her parents' house and took refuge at Tarbolton Mill. There Burns found her on his return, and thence he removed her to a house in 'Mauchline toun,' to the particular joy, a short while after, of Saunders Tait:—

' The wives they up their coats did kilt,
And through the streets so clean did stilt,
Some at the door fell wi' a pelt
 Maist broke their leg,
To see the Hen, poor wanton jilt!
 Lay her fourth egg.' ²

¹ M^cLehose outlived him many years.

² Some stanzas later in *B-rns's Hen Clockin in Mauchline*, Saunders (who has been likening Jean to a ship) thus notes her state:—

' Now she is sailing in the Downs,
Calls at the ports of finest towns,
To buy bed hangings and galloons':

and comments with fury on the fact that she's got, not only 'twa packs o' human leather,' but also

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Jean and
Clarinda.

Follows what is perhaps the most perplexing sequence of circumstances in a perplexing life. To Clarinda, who knew of the affair with Armour, pitied the victim—(this does *not* mean that she wished her married to Burns)—and had sped her shepherd on his homeward way with ‘twa wee sarkies’ for the victim’s little boy: a mistress, be it remembered, to whom he had written (14th February) in such terms as these:—‘I admire you, I love you as a woman beyond any one in the circle of creation’:—he wrote, a few days after his arrival at Mauchline, that he had ‘this morning’ (23rd February 1788) ‘called for a certain woman,’ and been ‘disgusted with her,’ so that he could not ‘endure her.’ Though his heart ‘smote him for the profanity,’ he sought to compare the two; and ‘’twas setting the expiring glimmer of a farthing taper beside the cloudless glory of the meridian sun.’ ‘Here,’ the Old Hawk continues, ‘*here* was tasteless insipidity, vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning. *There*, polished good sense, Heaven-born genius, and the most generous, the most delicate, the most tender passion.’ This to the contrary, it needs no great knowledge of life, and still less of Burns and Armour, to divine what happened; and it needs as little of Burns at this point in his career to see why he ended his confession to

‘A fine cap and peacock feather,
And wi’t she’s douce,
With a grand besom made of heather,
To sweep her house.’

It is worth noting that he winds up his lampoon by accusing the gossips at the lying-in of talking scandal of the rankest and reading *The Holy Fair*!

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Clarinda thus:—‘I have done with her, and she with me.’ Eight days after this (3rd March 1788), in a letter to Ainslie, some parts of it too ‘curious’ for a Victorian page, he tells a different story.¹ A letter to Ainslie.
 ‘Jean,’ says he, ‘I found banished like a martyr—
 forlorn, destitute, and friendless; all for the good
 old cause. I have reconciled her to her fate: I have
 reconciled her to her mother:² I have taken her a
 room: I have taken her to my arms: I have given
 her a mahogany bed: I have given her a guinea;
 and I have’—but here Scott Douglas’s garbling
 begins, and Burns’s inditing ends; and the original
 must be read, or the reader will never wholly under-
 stand what manner of man the writer was. Then
 comes an avowal so disconcerting that I cannot
 choose but disbelieve it, and conclude that it was
 made for some special purpose. ‘But,’ says the Old
 Hawk, ‘but, as I always am, on every occasion—I
 have been prudent and cautious to an astounding
 degree; I swore her, privately and solemnly, never
 to attempt any claim on me as a husband, even
 though anybody should persuade her she had such
 a claim, which she had not,³ neither during my life
 nor after my death. She did all this like a good
 girl, and . . .’ The rest is unquotable. At first
 consideration, the spectacle of the Bard keeping

¹ The letter is best described as a Crochallanism—as something written by one Fencible for the edification of another Fencible, and dealing with its subject in right Fencible style and from the correct Fencible point of view. I am afraid that, like the aforesaid letter to Clarinda, it was designed as what Ainslie himself, then unregenerate, might have called ‘a d—d bite.’

² Was reconciliation possible without a second offer of marriage? I doubt it.

³ This is literally true: the ‘unlucky paper’ was destroyed.

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Recon-
ciliation
with Jean.

'the wish'd, the trysted hour,' with a settled purpose of 'prudence and caution' in his mind, and as it were the materials for swearing in his pocket, in no wise makes for enlightenment. On reflection, however, it becomes evident that Burns wrote thus to Ainslie, whom he had asked to call on Clarinda in his absence, simply that Ainslie might quote her his report of a second (and an entirely superfluous) act of repudiation on Jean's part:¹ to the end, as I cannot doubt, of using the fact for all it was worth, when he himself appeared upon the scene. That this is at least a possible theory is shown by the terms in which he tells (7th March) the story of his reconciliation to Brown:²—'I found Jean with her cargo very well laid in. . . . I have turned her into a convenient harbour where she may lie snug till she unload, and have taken the command myself, not ostensibly, but for a time in secret.' This can only mean that he purposes to marry the girl. For all that, though, he still has hopes of a practical issue to his Edinburgh affair; for in his next letter (writ the same day) to Clarinda, who has reproached him for silence, and at the same time owned that she counts 'all things (Heaven excepted) but lost, that I may win and keep you,' 'Was it not blasphemy, then,' he asks, 'against your own charms and against my feelings, to suppose that a short fortnight could

¹ There was no need of oaths from Jean: her lover had had his bachelor's certificate in his pocket for months. And such swearing as there was—*was it not all on the other side?*

² It is important to note the difference in manner and tone and suggestion between Burns to Brown and Burns to Ainslie. Burns writes to Brown as friend to friend; to Ainslie as Fencible to Fencible—much, in fact, as Swiveller, President of the Glorious Apollos, to Chuckster, Vice of the same sublime Society.

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abate my passion! ' With a vast deal more to the same purpose. Three days after, he starts again for Edinburgh, and plunges deeper in desire than ever for his 'dearest angel' (so he calls her on 17th March), the 'dearest partner of his soul' (four days after). 'Oh Clarinda' (same date), 'what do I owe to Heaven for blessing me with such a piece of exalted excellence as you!' He must leave for Ellisland, *viâ* Mauchline, on the 24th; and 'Will you open,' he asks, 'with satisfaction and delight a letter'—('twas all to be limited to letters soon)—'from a man who loves, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and for ever!' They are to meet the next night, and he is to watch—(right Arcady, this!)—her lighted window:—''Tis the star that guides me to Paradise.' And for him 'the great relish to all is—that Honour—that Innocence—that Religion, are the witnesses and guarantees of our happiness.' Follows a bit of the Bible adapted to their peculiar case; and with an 'Adieu, Clarinda! I am going' ^{Adieu, Clarinda!} to remember you in my prayers,' the Old Hawk stoops to his perch for the night. Nothing is known of the last engagement; but apparently the citadel remains inviolate, for the leaguer is raised next day, and the besieger draws off his forces by way of Glasgow. Thence he writes to Brown (26th March) that 'these eight days' he has been 'positively crazed.' And by the 7th April he has ^{His} made Jean Armour his wife. ^{marriage.}

An amazing love-story? True. But that love-story it was—that Burns was first and last enamoured of the woman he made his wife—is shown, I think,

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by the fact that to all intents and purposes he married her twice over. As for Clarinda, well . . . ! Clarinda complicates and exhilarates the interest to this extent at least : that if words mean anything, and the Bard be judged by those he wrote, the Bard, had Clarinda been indeed a widow, might at a given moment have found himself incapable of making Jean an honest woman. And had he followed his fancy, not his heart? How had the two Arcadians fared? 'Tis for some future Chambers to divine and say.

VII

At Ellisland. MEANWHILE he had taken Ellisland, a farm in Dumfriesshire, of Miller of Dalswinton : with an allowance from his landlord, a worthy and generous man, of £300, for a new steading and outhouses. His marriage at last made formal and public (it seems to have been celebrated by Gavin Hamilton), on the 5th August 1788 the bride and bridegroom appeared before the Session, acknowledged its irregularity, demanded its 'solemn confirmation,' were sentenced to be rebuked, were 'solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as husband and wife all the days of their life,' and were finally 'absolved from any scandal' on the old account. But the new steading was long a-building. It was not till the 6th November that Burns and Jean set up their rest in Dumfriesshire ; and even so, they had to go, not to their own farmhouse—(it was not ready for them till the August of 1789)—but, to a place called 'The Isle,' about a

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mile away from it. Burns had taken Ellisland on the advice of a friendly expert ;¹ but he had had his doubts about the wisdom of 'guid auld Glen's' decision, and these were soon justified. For a time, however, he stuck to his work like a man : conversing much, it would seem, in his leisure with his neighbour Glenriddell, and others, whose honoured guest he was, making and vamping songs, paying some heed to national and local politics, and finding time for letters not a few—among them a long and elaborate criticism on some worthless verses by that crazy creature, Helen Maria Williams.² But by the end of July 1789 he had resolved to turn his holding into a dairy farm to be run by Jean and his sisters, and to take up his Gaugership³ in earnest ;

¹ 'A lease was granted to the poetical farmer' (thus Heron, who knew the country) 'at the annual rent which his own friends declared that the due cultivation of his farm might easily enable him to pay.' But those friends, being Ayrshiremen, 'were little acquainted with the soil, with the manures, with the markets, with the dairies, with the modes of improvement in Dumfriesshire'; they had estimated his rental at Ayrshire rates; so that, 'contrary to his landlord's intention,' he must pay more for Ellisland than Ellisland was worth. According to the elder Cunningham, Ellisland was a poet's choice, not a farmer's.

² Burns was not only a reader himself: he was ever the cause of reading in others. One of his occupations at Ellisland was the foundation and the management of a book-club. He took the keenest interest in the work, was especially careful in selection, and, according to Glenriddell, did whatever must be done himself. Like his father, he believed in education; and, like his father, he did his best to educate his kind by all the means which lay to his hand. He held that the peasant could not but be the better for good reading; and he exerted himself to the utmost to give the peasant what seemed to him the best that could be had. That he did so is as honourable a circumstance as is found in his career.

³ By Glencairn's interest he had been appointed to a place in the Excise as early as 1787.

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Appointed
exciseman.

and on the 10th of August, some brief while after the completion of *The Kirk's Alarm*, he learned from Graham of Fintry (whom he had met, in 1787, at the Duke of Athole's, on his Second Highland Tour) that he was appointed Exciseman for that district of Dumfriesshire in which Ellisland is situate. The work was hard, for he had charge of ten parishes, and must ride two hundred miles a week to get his duty done. But by the beginning of December, 'I have found,' he writes, 'the Excise business go a great deal smoother with me than I expected'; and that he 'sometimes met the Muses,' as he jogged through the Nithsdale hills, is shown by the fact that *The Whistle*, the excellent verses on Captain Grose (with whom he made acquaintance at Glenriddell's table), and *Thou Ling'ring Star*, with *Willie Brew'd*, that best of drinking-songs, and *The Five Carlines* (a notable piece of mimicry, if no more), all belong to the period of his probation, and were all written before the end of the year. Plainly, too, he was an officer at once humane and vigilant: since, while it is told of him that he could always wink when staring would mean blank ruin to some old unchartered ale-wife (say), his first year's 'decreet'—his share, that is, of the fines imposed upon his information—was worth some fifty or sixty pounds. Exercise and the open air are held good for a man's health; yet in the winter of 1789-90 this man suffered cruelly from his old ailment. As for verse, the *Elegy on Matthew Henderson* and *Tam o' Shanter* (1790) seem a poor year's output for the poet of those wonderful months at Mossiel. But work for

' Humane.
and
vigilant.'

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Johnson was going steadily on ; so that the results of these barren-looking times are in a sort the best known of his titles to greatness and to fame. Thus he strove, and faltered, and achieved till 1791, by the beginning of which year he had realised that Ellisland was impossible ; that he could not afford his rent, which (so he told Mrs. Dunlop) was raised that year by £20, and must depend entirely on his Excisemanship: when he asked for service in a port, and, by Mrs. Dunlop's interest, was transferred to 'a vacant side-walk' in Dumfries town. Thither, his landlord setting no manner of impediment in his way, and his crops and gear having been well and profitably sold,¹ he removed himself in December, and established his family in a little house in the In Dumfries town.
Wee Vennel.

'Tis a circumstance to note that, beginning at Ellisland as the Burns of *Of A' the Airts*, some time before the end he was the Burns of *Yestreen I Had a Pint o' Wine*.² That is, he married Jean in the April of 1788, and some two years after he got Anne Park with child. Jean bore him his second

¹ The standing crops were 'rouped' in the last week of August. They realised 'a guinea an acre above the average.' But such a riot of drunkenness was 'hardly ever seen in this country.' See Burns to Sloan (Scott Douglas, v. 394) for details and for a confession:—'You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene ; as I was no farther over than you used to see me':—which take you back to the Burns of *The Jolly Beggars*. The stock and gear 'were not sold till August' (Scott Douglas, v. 392). 'We did not come empty-handed to Dumfries,' Mrs. Burns told M'Diarmid. 'The Ellisland sale was a very good one. A cow in her first calf brought eighteen guineas, and the purchaser never rued his bargain. Two other cows brought good prices. They had been presented by Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop.'

² I have read somewhere that the first quatrain—the flower of the song—is old ; but I cannot verify the description.

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son (in wedlock) the 9th April 1791; and Anne Park had been delivered of a daughter by him ten days before (31st March). Some say that she died in childbed; some that she lived to marry a soldier. Nobody knows, and, apparently, nobody cares, what became of her. *She* was no 'white rose' (with a legend). She was scarce a 'passion flower';¹ and though the Bard himself thought the ditty he made upon her one of his best, the 'episode' in which she played a principal part is not regarded with any special interest by his biographers. She was a tavern waitress, and he was the Bard; and she pleased him; and she lived, or died—it matters not which; and there's an end on't. The true interest consists, perhaps, in the magnanimity of Jean, who, lying-in a few days after the interloper, was somehow moved to receive the interloper's child, and to suckle it with her own. It is further to note that Anne Park is the last of Burns's mistresses who has a name. That she was not the last in fact you gather from Currie;² but this one is innominate.

¹ Chambers declares that, if Jean had not been away in Ayrshire, there would have been no Elizabeth Burns: which is surely the boldest apology for a husband's lapse, at the same time that it is the frankest admission of this particular husband's inability to cleave to his wife in absence, that has ever been offered to an admiring world. Scott Douglas knocks it on the head, and shows that Chambers's valour is greater than Chambers's sense of history, by proving that neither in the June nor the July of 1790 could Jean have been away.

² He has been roundly and deservedly reprov'd for the manner and the circumstances in which he published his report—(of an 'accidental complaint')—which, by the way, was started by Heron. For another piece of scandal, whether published or not I do not know—that at Dumfries the Bard walked openly with harlots—it is, of course, entirely unauthenticated; and I here refer to it but for the purpose of

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So far as is known, the goddesses of the years to come, the Chlorises and Marias and Jessies :—

‘ ’Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside ’ :—

are all platonic in practice, if not in idea. The recipe for song-making was soon to be this :—‘ I put myself in the regimen of adoring a fine woman, and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you ’—Thomson—‘ are delighted with my verses.’ It was a mistake, so far as the world is concerned. But Burns made it ; and by the time it was made, he probably knew no better. In his last years, indeed, the irresponsible Faunus of Mossgiel and Edinburgh becomes a kind of sentimental sultan, who changes, or rewards, his slaves of dream with a magnificence which, edifying or not, is at least amusing. Thus, you find him designing the publication of a book of songs, with portraits of the beauties by whom they are inspired ; Maria Riddell is expelled his lyrical harem as with a fork, because she has offended him ; Jean Lorimer, she of ‘ the lint-white locks ’—(‘ Bonnie lassie, artless lassie ! ’)—is the Chloris of ditty after ditty, till of a sudden Chloris is a disgusting name, and ‘ what you once mentioned of “ flaxen locks ” is just ’—so just, indeed, that ‘ they cannot enter into

The recipe
for song-
making.

A book of
beauties.

pointing out that, if it were true, the fact of such familiarities, however horrifying to respectable Dumfries, would sit lightly enough both on Burns the peasant and on Burns the poet of *The Jolly Beggars* and *My Auntie Jean Held to the Shore* : that, if it were true, the memory of Burns exchanging terms with the light-heels of the poet were simply one to set beside the memory of Burton rejoicing in the watermen at the bridge-foot at Oxford.

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an elegant description of beauty.'¹ This he discovers in the February of 1796, in the July of which year he dies. And he keeps up his trick of throwing the lyric handkerchief till the end. All through his last illness he is tenderly solicitous about his wife, be it remembered ; yet the deathbed songs for Jessie Lewars are the best of those closing years.

In the result, then, Ellisland was a mistake : not so much because it was a farm, as because it was not Burns's own.² He was essentially and unalterably a peasant ; and as a peasant-poet, a crofter taking down the best verses ever dictated by the Vernacular Muse, he might, one would like to think, what with work in the fields, and work at his desk, and the strong, persuasive inducements of home, have attained to length of days and peace of mind and the achievement of still greater fame, at the same time that he realised the ideal which he has sublimated in some famous lines :—

‘ To mak' a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.’

Plainly, though, it could not be. He had too much

¹ Is it not all the Peasant and his womankind ? The peasant's women are his equals. The sentiment of chivalry is not included in his heritage ; and he treats his associates in that lot of penury and toil which is his birthright as the ‘ predominant partner,’ the breadwinner, the provider of children, may : he punishes, that is, and he rewards. It is unlikely that this was Burns's practice with Jean ; but assuredly it was his practice with the ‘ fine women ’ of his dreams.

² He would have liked the life well enough, he says, had he tilled his own acres. But to take care of another man's, at the cost, too, of a horrible and ever-recurring charge called rent—that was the devil !

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genius, too much temperament, for it to be: with too much interest in life, which to him, however diverse and however variable his moods, meant, largely, if not wholly, Wine and Women and Song. Also, he had been too hardly used, too desperately driven in his youth, and too splendidly petted and pampered in his manhood, to endure with constancy the work by which the tenant-farmer has to earn his bread. He had seen his father fail at Mount Oliphant and Lochlie; and he had shared his brother's failure at Mossgiel. By no fault of his own, but owing to the circumstance that he had taken a holding out of which he could not make his rent, he failed himself at Ellisland; and though, in his case, there was small risk of 'a factor's snash,' he was infinitely too honest and too proud to take undue advantage of another man's bounty: so, to make ends meet, he turned gauger, and took charge of ten parishes and rode two hundred miles a week in all weathers. It was a thing he'd always wanted to do, and, at the time he took to doing it, it was the only thing that could profitably be done by him. But his misfortune in having to do it was none the less for that. It took him from his home, it unsettled his better habits, it threw him back on Edinburgh and his triumphing experience as an idler and a Bard, it led him into temptation by divers ways. And when Pan, his goat-foot father—Pan, whom he featured so closely, in his great gift of merriment, his joy in life, his puissant appetites, his innate and never-failing humanity—would whistle on him from the thicket, he could not often stop his ears to the call. He was the most brilliant and the

Idler and
Bard.

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most popular figure in the district ; he loved good-fellowship ; he needed applause ; he rejoiced in the proof of his own pre-eminence in talk—rejoiced, too, in the transcendentalising effect of liquor upon the talker¹ as in the positive result of his name and fame, his *prestance* and his personality, upon adoring women. Is it not plain that Dumfries was inevitable ? Or, rather, is it not plain that, first and last, the life was one logical, irrefragable sequence of preparations for the death ? That Mount Oliphant and Lochlie led irresistibly to Mauchline, as Mauchline to Edinburgh, and Edinburgh to Ellisland, and Ellisland to the house in the Mill Vennel ? And is not the lesson of it all that there is none so unfortunate as the misplaced Titan—the man too great for his circumstances ? Speaking broadly, I can call none to mind who, in strength and genius and temperament, presents so close a general likeness to Burns as Mirabeau. Born a noble, and given an opportunity commensurate with himself, Burns would certainly have done such work as Mirabeau's, and done it at least as well. Born a Scots peasant, Mirabeau must, as certainly, have lived the life and died the death of Burns. In truth, it is only the fortune of war that we remember the one by his conduct of the Revolution, which called his highest capacities into action, while we turn to the other for his verses, which are the out-

The
misplaced
Titan.

¹ He complained (to Clarinda) long ere this of the 'savage hospitality' he could not choose but accept. And, in effect, he had the ill-luck to start drinking at a time when whisky, fire-new from the Highlands, was the fashionable tippie, and was fast superseding ale. Born a generation earlier, when ale and claret were the staple comforters, he had stood a better chance.

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come (so Maria Riddell thought, and was not alone in thinking) of by no means his strongest gift.

VIII

WHATEVER the sequel, it may fairly be said for Ellisland that Burns and Jean were happy there, and that it saw the birth of *Tam o' Shanter* and the perfecting, in the contributions to Johnson's *Museum*, of the Vernacular Song.¹ The last, as we know, was Burns's work ; but he had assistants, and they did him yeoman service. He worked in song exactly as he worked in satire and the rest—on familiar, old-established bases ; but he did so to a very much greater extent than in satire and the rest, and with a great deal more of help and inspiration from without. I have said that he contributed nothing to Vernacular Poetry except himself, but, his contribution apart, was purely Scots-Traditional ; and this is especially true of his treatment of the Vernacular Song. What he found ready to his hand was, in brief, his country's lyric life. Scotland had had singers before him ; and they, nameless now and forgotten save as factors in the sum of his achievement, had sung of life and the

¹ I say nothing of the numbers sent to Thomson. Very many are copied from the *Museum*, and the others need not here be discussed with even an approach to particularity. A point to note in connection with the contributions both to the *Museum* and to *Scottish Airs* is that Burns was honourably and intensely proud of them. He regarded them as work done in the service of the Scotland whose 'own inspired Bard' he was, and neither asked money, nor would take it, for them. To think that he was writing for Thomson to the very end is to have at least one pleasant memory of Dumfries.

ESSAYS

The
folk-song.

experiences of life, the tragedy of death and defeat, the farce and the romance of sex, the rapture and the fun of battle and drink, with sincerity always, and often, very often, with rich or rich-rank humour. Among them they had observed and realised a little world of circumstance and character ; among them they had developed the folk-song, had fixed its type, had cast it into the rhythms which best fitted its aspirations, had equipped it with all manner of situations and refrains, and, above all, had possessed it of a great number of true and taking lyrical ideas. Any one who has tried to write a song will agree with me, when I say that a lyrical idea—by which I mean a rhythm, a burden, and a drift—once found, the song writes itself. It writes itself easily or with difficulty, it writes itself well or ill ; but in the end it writes itself. In this matter of lyrical ideas Burns was fortunate beyond any of Apollo's sons. He had no need to quest for them : there they lay ready to his hand, and he had but to work his will with them. That they were there explains the wonderful variety of his humours, his effects, and his themes : that he could live and work up to so many among them is proof positive and enduring of the apprehensiveness of his humanity, his gift of right, far-ranging sympathy. It is certain that, had he not been, they had long since passed out of practical life into the Chelsea Hospital of some antiquarian publication. But it is also certain that, had they not been there for him to take and despoil and use, he would not have been—he could not have been—the master-lyrist we know. What he found was of quite extra-

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ordinary worth to him ; what he added was himself, and his addition made the life of his find perennial. But, much as are the touch of genius and the stamp of art, they are not everything. The best of many nameless singers lives in Burns's songs ; but that Burns lives so intense a lyric life is largely due to the fact that he took to himself, and made his own, the lyrical experience, the lyrical longing, the lyrical invention, the lyrical possibilities of many nameless singers. He was the last and the greatest of them all ; but he could not have been the greatest by so very much as he seems, had these innominates not been, nor could his songs have been so far-wandered as they are, nor so long-lived as they must be, had these innominates not lived their lyric life before him. In other terms, the atmosphere, the style, the tone, the realistic method and design,¹ with much of the material and the humanity, of Burns's songs are inherited. Again and again his forefathers find him in lyrical

Nameless
singers.

An
inherited
style.

¹ As I have said, realism is the distinguishing note of the Vernacular School ; and the folk-singers are not less curious in detail than their literary associates and forebears. Even that long sob of pain, *O, Waly, Waly*, has its elements of everyday life and circumstance :—

‘ My love was clad in the black velvet,
And I myself in cramasie ’ :—

its references to St. Anton's Well and Arthur's Seat and the sheets that ‘sall ne'er be pressed by me.’ Cf., too, that wonderful little achievement in romance, *The Twa Corbies* :—

‘ Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pyke out his bonie blue een,
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair
We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.’

Cf., too, in other styles, *Toddlin Hame* and *Ellibanks and Ellibraes* and—well, any folk-song you care to try !

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ideas, in whose absence there must certainly—there cannot but have been—a blank in his work. They are his best models, and he does not always surpass them, as he is sometimes not even their equal.¹ And if his effect along certain lines and in certain specified directions be so intense and enduring as it is, the reason is that they are a hundred strong behind him, and that he has selected from each and all of them that which was lyrical and incorruptible. A peasant like themselves, he knew them as none else could ever know. He sympathised from within with their ambitions, their fancies, their ideals, their derisions, even as he was master, and something more, of their methods. And, while it is fair to say that what is best in them is sublimated and glorified by him, it is also fair to say that, but for them, he could never have approved himself the most exquisite artist in folk-song the world has ever seen.

It has been complained that, thus much of his claim to be original removed, he must henceforth shine in the lyrical heaven with a certain loss of magnitude and his splendour something dimmed.

Fact and
legend.

And this is so far true that the Burns of fact differs,

¹ Cf. *O, Waly, Waly* and *The Twa Corbies* and *Helen of Kirconnel*; with *Toddlin Hame*, which Burns thought 'the first bottle-song in the world,' the old sets of *A Cock-Laird Fu' Cadgie* and *Fee Him, Father*, and, in yet another genre, *O, Were My Love*. Even in *The Merry Muses* Burns, who wrote a particular class of song with admirable gust and spirit, does no better work than some of the innominates—the poets of *Erroch Brae* and *Johnie Scott* and *Jenny M'Craw*, for example; while his redaction of *Ellibanks and Ellibraes*—('an old free-spoken song which celebrates this locality would be enough in itself to bring the poet twenty miles out of his way to see it')—is in no wise superior to the original.

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and differs considerably and at many points, from the Burns of legend. The one is an effect of certain long-lived, inexorable causes ; the other—that ‘formidable rival of the Almighty,’ who, deriving from nobody, and appearing from nowhere, does in ten years the work of half-a-dozen centuries—is an impossible superstition, as it were a Scottish Mumbo-Jumbo. The one comes, naturally and inevitably, at the time appointed, to an appointed end ; but by no conceivable operation in the accomplishing of human destiny could the other have so much as begun to be. And, after all, however poignant the regret, and however wide-eyed and resentful the amazement of those who esteem a man’s work on the same terms as they would a spider’s, and value it in proportion as it does, or does not, come out of his own belly, enough remains to Burns to keep him easily first in the first flight of singers in the Vernacular, and to secure him, outside the Vernacular, the fame of an unique artist. I have said that, as I believe, his genius was at once imitative and emulous ; and, so far as the Vernacular Song is concerned, to turn the pages of our Third Volume is to see that, speaking broadly, his function was not origination but treatment, and that in treatment it is that the finer qualities of his endowment are best expressed and displayed. His measures are high-handed enough ; but they are mostly justified.¹ He never boggles at appropri-

His appropriation.

¹ Not always. See Vol. iii. (p. 96 and Note) for an attempt to improve upon Ayton (or another), and Vol. iv. (p. 42 and Note) for another to improve upon Carew. Both are failures ; but only one is in the Vernacular, and neither owns a Vernacular original.

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tion,¹ so that some of his songs are the oddest conceivable mixture of Burns, Burns's original, and somebody Burns has pillaged. Take, for instance, that arch and fresh and charming thing, *For the sake of Somebody*. In the first place, 'Somebody' comes to Burns as a Jacobite catchword ; and in the next, the lyrical idea is found in a poor enough botch by Allan Ramsay :—

' For the sake of Somebody,
For the sake of Somebody,
I could wake a winter's night
For the sake of Somebody.'

Master and
journeyman.

This is pretty certainly older than *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, and has nothing whatever to do with the verses which the later minstrel has tagged it withal. But it is a right lyrical idea, and in the long-run a lyrical idea is a song. So thinks Burns ; and you have but to compare the two sets to see the difference between master and journeyman at a glance. The old, squalid, huckstering little comedy of courtship :—

' First we 'll buckle, then we 'll tell,
Let her flyte and syne come to . . .
I 'll slip hame and wash my feet,
An' steal on linens fair and clean,

¹ Besides the folk-singers and the nameless lyrists of the song-books, he is found pilfering from Sedley, Garrick, Lloyd, Ramsay, Fergusson, Theobald, Carew, Mayne, Dodsley, and Sir Robert Ayton (or another). See also our Notes (Vol. iii.) on *Duncan Davison*, on *Landlady*, *Count the Lawin*, on *Sweetest May*, on *The Winter it is Past*, on *We're A' Noddin*, to name but these ; and, as a further illustration of his method, note that, according to Scott Douglas (ms. annotation), the first three lines of *Gat Ye Me* belong to old song No. 1., the next five to Burns, and the last eight to old song No. 11.

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Syne at the trysting place we'll meet,
To do but what my dame has done ' :—

gives place to a thing to-day as comfortable to the ear and as telling to the heart as when Burns vamped it from Ramsay's vamp from somebody unknown. What is further to note is that not all the latest vamp is Burns *plus* Ramsay *plus* Innominate i. *plus* Jacobite catchword: inasmuch as the first line of Stanza II. is conveyed from an owlsh lover in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* :—

'Ye powers that preside over virtuous love.'

Thus some solemn poetaster a good half-century at least ere Burns; and for over a hundred years 'Ye powers that smile on virtuous love' has lived as pure Burns, and as pure Burns is now passed into the language. Yet, despite the pilferings and the hints, it were as idle to pretend that *Somebody*, as it stands, is not Burns, as it were foolish to assert that Burns would have written *Somebody* without a certain unknown ancestor. Another flash of illustration comes from *It Was A' For Our Rightfu' King*: with its third stanza lifted clean from *Mally Stewart*, and set in a jewel of Burnsian gold, especially contrived and chased to set it off and make the lyric best of it. A third example is found in *A Red, Red Rose*, which, as we have shown (iii. 143 and Note), is a mosaic of rather beggarly scraps of English verse: just as Jonson's peerless *Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes* is a mosaic contrived in scraps of conceited Greek prose. It is exquisitely done, of course: but, the beggarly scraps of verse away, could it ever have been done at all? And

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Auld Lang Syne. *Auld Lang Syne?* It passes for pure Burns ; but was the phrase itself—the phrase which by his time had rooted itself in the very vitals of the Vernacular—was the phrase itself, I say, not priceless to him? Something or nothing may be due to Ramsay for his telling demonstration of the way in which it should *not* be used as a refrain. But what of that older maker and the line which Burns himself thought worth repeating, and which the world rejoices, and will long rejoice, to repeat with Burns :—

‘ *Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
An’ never thocht upon ?* ’

Is there nothing of his cadence, no taste of his sentiment, no smack of his lyrical idea, no memory (to say the least) of his burden :—

‘ On old long syne, my jo,
On old long syne,
That thou canst never once reflect
On old long syne ’ :—

in the later masterpiece? To say ‘ No ’ were surely to betray criticism. And *Ay Waukin*, O—should we, could we ever, have had it, had there been nobody but Burns to start the tune and invent the lyrical idea?

‘ O, wat, wat,
O, wat and weary !
Sleep I can get nane
For thinkin o’ my dearie.

‘ A’ the night I wake,
A’ the day I weary,
Sleep I can get nane
For thinkin o’ my dearie.’

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Thus, it may be, some broken man, in hiding among the wet hags ; some moss-trooper, drenched and prowling, with a shirtful of sore bones ! Whoever he was, and whatever his calling and condition, he had at least one lyrical impulse, he has his part in a masterpiece by Burns, and his part is no small one.

I might multiply examples, and pile Pelion upon Ossa of proof. But to do so were simply to repeat the *Bibliographical* and the *Notes* to our Third Volume ; and in this place I shall be better employed in pointing out that these double conceptions (so to speak), these achievements in lyrical collaboration, are for the most part the best known and the best liked of Burns's songs, and are, moreover, those among Burns's songs which show Burns the songsmith at his finest. The truth is that he wrote two lyric styles : (1) the style of the Eighteenth Century Song-Books,¹ which is a bad one, and in which he

Two lyric
styles.

¹ He was trained in it from the first. In early youth he carried an English song-book about with him—wore it in his breeches-pocket, so to speak. This was *The Lark* : 'Containing a Collection of above Four Hundred and Seventy Celebrated English and Scotch Songs, None of which are contain'd in the other Collections of the same size, call'd *The Syren* and *The Nightingale*. With a Curious and Copious Alphabetical Glossary for Explaining the *Scotch* words. London. Printed (1746) for John Osborn at the Golden Ball in Pater Noster Row.' 'Tis a fat little book, and as multifarious a collection of Restoration and—especially—post-Restoration songs as one could wish to have. Antiquated political squibs ; ballads, as *Chevy Chase*, with *Gilderoy*, the *Queen's Old Soldier*, and *Katherine Hayes* ; a number of indecencies from D'Urfey's *Pills* ; Scots folk-songs, like *Toddlin Hame* and *The Ewe Bughts*, and *O, Waly, Waly* and *John Ochiltree* and *The Blithesome Bridal* ; current English ditties like *Old Sir Simon* and *Phillida Flouts Me* ; a song of a Begging Soldier, whose vaunt, 'With my rags upon my bum,' is echoed in *The Jolly Beggars* ; much Allan Ramsay ; with scattered examples of Dryden, Dorset, Congreve, Alexander Scott, Brome, Prior, Wycherley, Rochester,

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The Eighteenth
Century
Song-Book.

could be as vulgar, or as frigid, or as tame, as very much smaller men ;¹ and (2) the style of the Vernacular Folk-Song, which he handled with that understanding and that mastery of means and ends which stamp the artist. To consider his experiments in the first is to scrape acquaintance with *Clarinda, Mistress of My Soul, and Turn Again, Thou Fair Eliza, and On A Bank of Flowers, and Sensibility, How Charming, and Castle Gordon, and A Big-Bellied Bottle, and Strathallan's Lament, and Raving Winds Around Her Blowing, and How Pleasant the Banks, and A Rosebud By My Early Walk,*² and many a thing besides, which, were it not known for the work of a great poet, would long

Farquhar, Cibber—even Skelton ; and a wilderness of commonplace ditties about love and drink. On the whole an interesting collection. Particularly if you take it as an element in the education of the lyric Burns.

¹ Cf. *Their Groves of Sweet Myrtle* (Vol. iii. 252-3 and Note), among other things :—

' The slave's spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains
The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain ;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save Love's *willing fetters*—the chains o' his Jean.'

Such achievements in what Mr. Meredith calls 'the Bathetic,' are less infrequent in Burns than could be wished.

² It is understood that *Scots Wha Hae* is an essay in the Vernacular (I gather, by the way, that it is one of the two or three pieces by 'the Immortal Exciseman nurtured ayont the Tweed' which are most popular in England). But, even so, one has but to contrast it with *Is There for Honest Poverty*, to recognise that in the one the writer's technical and lyrical mastery is complete, while in the other it is merely academic—academic as the lyrical and technical mastery of (say) *Rule Britannia*. Now, *Is There for Honest Poverty* is calqué on a certain disreputable folk-song ; while *Scots Wha Hae* is for all practical purposes the work of an Eighteenth Century Scotsman writing in English, and now and then propitiating the fiery and watchful Genius of Caledonia by spelling a word as it is spelt in the Vernacular.

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since have gone down into the limbo that gapes for would-be art. In the other are all the little master-pieces by which Burns the lyrist is remembered. He had a lead in *The Silver Tassie*¹ and in *Auld Lang Syne*, in *A Man's a Man* and *Duncan Davidson*, in *A Waukrife Minnie* and *Duncan Gray and Finlay*, in *I Hae a Wife* and *It Was A' For Our Rightfu' King* and *A Red, Red Rose*, in *Macpherson's Lament*, and *Ay Waukin, O*, and *Somebody*, and *Whistle, and I'll Come to You*—in all or very nearly all, the numbers which make his lyrical bequest as it were a little park apart—an unique retreat of rocks and sylvan corners and heathy spaces, with an abundance of wildings, and here and there a hawthorn brake where, to a sound of running water, the Eternal Shepherd tells his tale—in the spacious and smiling demesne of English Literature. And my contention—that it is to Burns the artist in folk-song that we must turn for thorough contentment—is proved to the hilt by those lyrics in the Vernacular for which, so far as we know, he found no hint elsewhere, and in which, so far as we know, he expressed himself and none besides. He had no suggestions, it seems (but I would not like to swear), no catchwords, no lyrical material for *Tam Glen* and *Of A' the Airts*, for *Willie Brewed* and *Bonie Doon*, for *Last May a Braw Wooer* and *O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast*,² and *Mary Morison*

¹ 'The first four lines are old,' he says, 'the rest is mine.' And, in effect, the quatrain is unique in his work.

² It is oddly and amusingly illustrative of Burns's trick of mosaic that a line in this charming song:

'The brightest jewel in my crown':
comes bodily from—*The Court of Equity*!

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—to name no more. But, if they be directly referable to nobody but himself, they feature his whole ancestry. They are folk-songs writ by a peasant of genius, who was a rare and special artist ; and they show that the closer he cleaved to folk-models, and the fuller and stronger his possession by the folk-influence, the more of the immortal Burns is there to-day.

Reality not
romance.

Suggested or not, the songs of Burns were devised and written by a peasant, devising and writing for peasants. The emotions they deal withal are the simplest, the most elemental, in the human list, and are figured in a style so vivid and direct as to be classic in its kind. Romance there is none in them, for there was none in Burns ¹—'tis the sole point, perhaps, at which he was out of touch with the unrenowned generations whose flower and crown he was. But of reality, which could best and

¹ None, or so little that if his Jacobitisms seem romantic, it is only by contrast with the realities in which they occur. The interest of even *It Was A' For Our Rightfu' King* is centred in the vampir's sympathy with, not the romantic situation :—

' He turned him richt and round about
Upon the Irish shore,' etc. :—

but with that living, breathing, palpitating 'actuality' of sentiment developed in both hero and heroine by the disastrous turn of circumstances :—

' Now a' is done that man can do,
And a' is done in vain ' :—

and the position created by those circumstances at the end :—

' But I hae parted from my love
Never to meet again ' :—

which places this lyric somewhere near the very top of homely and familiar song.

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soonest bring them home to the class in which their genius was developed, and to which themselves were addressed :—

' Grain de musc qui gît invisible
Au fond de leur éternité ' :—

there is enough to keep them sweet while the Vernacular is read. They are for all, or nearly all, the peasant's trades and crafts : so that the gangrel tinker shares them with the spinner at her wheel, the soldier with the ploughman, the weaver with the gardener and the tailor and the herd. Morals, experiences, needs, love and liquor, the rejoicing vigour and unrest of youth, the placid content of age—there is scarce anything he can endure which is not brilliantly, and (above all) sincerely and veraciously, set forth in them. That old-world Scotland, whose last and greatest expression was Burns, either has passed or is fast passing away. In language, manners, morals, ideals, religion, substance, capacity, the theory and practice of life—in all these the country of Burns has changed : in some, has changed ' beyond report, thought, or belief.' But that much of her which was known to her Poet is with us still, and is with us in these songs. For man and woman change not, but endure for ever : so that what was truly said a thousand years ago comes home as truth to-day, and will go home as truth when to-day is a thousand years behind. To the making of these things there went the great and generous humanity of Burns, with the humanity, less great but still generous and sincere, of those unknowns, whose namelessness was ever a regret to

Old-world
Scotland.

ESSAYS

him.¹ They are art in their kind. And there is no reason why this 'little Valclusa fountain' should lack pilgrims, or run dry, for centuries.²

IX

A story of
decadence.

I PURPOSE to deal with the Dumfries period with all possible brevity. The story is a story of decadence; and, even if it were told in detail, would tell us nothing of Burns that we have not already heard or are not all-too well prepared to learn. In a little town, where everybody's known to everybody, there is ever an infinite deal of scandal; and Burns was too reckless and too con-

¹ 'Are you not quite vexed to think that these men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heartache' (R. B. to Thomson, 19th November 1794). And see his *Journal* for a more heart-felt recognition still.

² They lived not long the limited life of Johnson's *Musical Museum* and Thomson's *Scottish Airs*. Thus, in a collection of North of England chap-books (c. 1810-20) which I owe to the kindness of the Earl of Crawford, I find at least two Burns 'Songsters'—(they are the same, but one is called 'The Ayrshire Bard's Songster,' the other something else)—both 'Printed by J. Marshall in the Old Fleshmarket,' Newcastle. In a third—a miscellany, this one—is *Scots Wha Hae*, 'As sung by Mr. Braham at the Newcastle Theatre Royal' (Carlyle thought this famous lyric should be 'sung by the throat of the whirlwind'; but it had better luck than *that*). The great Jew tenor further warbled a couple of stanzas of *The Winter It is Past* at a concert in the same city, when Miss Stephens was responsible for *Charlie He's My Darling*. In other chaps Burns is found rubbing shoulders with Moore and Campbell and Tom Dibdin, and a hundred others, among them Allan Ramsay. In these *Of A' the Airts* is sandwiched between *The Twopenny Postman* and the *Wedding at Ballyporeen*, while *Somebody* is kept in countenance by *Paddy Carey* and *The Wounded Hussar*. The most popular, perhaps, are *Of A' the Airts* and *Scots Wha Hae*, and *Willie Brew'd*; but *On a Bank of Flowers* lacks not admirers.

ROBERT BURNS

spicuous not to become a peculiar cockshy for the scandalmongers of Dumfries. In a little town, especially if it be a kind of provincial centre, there must of necessity be many people with not much to do besides talking and drinking; and Burns was ever too careless of consequences, as well as ever too resolute to make the most of the fleeting hour—it may be, too, was by this time too princely and too habitual a boon-companion—to refrain from drink and talk when drink and talk were to be had. In the sequel, also, it would seem that that old jealousy of his betters (to use the ancient phrase) had come to be a more disturbing influence than it had ever been before. He knew, none better, that, however brilliantly the poet had succeeded, the man was so far a failure as an investment, that, with bad health and a growing family, he had nothing to look forward to but promotion in the Excise; and his discontent with the practical outcome of his ambition and the working result of his fame was certainly not soothed, and may very well have been exacerbated, by his rather noisy sympathy with the leading principles of the French Revolution. He was too fearless and too proud to dissemble that sympathy, which was presently (1794) to find expression in one of his most vigorous and telling lyrics; he was, perhaps, too powerful a talker not to exaggerate its quality and volume; and, though it was common, in the beginning at least, to many Scotsmen, its expression got him, as was inevitable, into trouble with his superiors, and in the long-run was pretty certainly intensified, to the point at which resentment is translated into terms of indiscretion

The French
Revolution.

ESSAYS

and imprudence, by the reflection, whether just or not,¹ that it had damaged his chances of promotion. That he fought against temptation is as plain as that he proved incapable of triumph, and that, as Carlyle has wisely and humanely noted, the best for him, certain necessary conditions being impossible, was to die. Syme,² who knew and loved him, said that he was 'burnt to a cinder' ere Death took him ; we can see for ourselves that the Burns of the *Kilmarnock Volume* and the good things in the *Museum* had ceased to be some time before the end ; there is evidence that some time before the end he was neither a sober companion nor a self-respecting husband. And the reflection is not to be put by,

¹ It seems to have been unjust. Pitt, though he loved the poetry of Burns, did nothing for him—was probably, indeed, too busy to think of doing anything once the page was read and the bottle done ; and Fox, to whom Burns looked for advancement, was ever out of office, and could do nothing, even had he been minded to do something, which we are not told that he was. But the Bard had a sure stay in Graham of Fintry ; and, though Glencairn was dead, and he was sometimes reprimanded (*et pour cause*), there is no reason to believe that he would have missed preferment had he lived to be open to it.

² It has been said, I believe, that Syme's evidence is worthless, inasmuch as it tends to discredit Burns. But one eye-witness, however dull and prejudiced (and Syme was neither one nor other), is worth a wilderness of sentimental historians ; and Syme's phrase, howbeit it is so picturesque that it conveys what is, perhaps, too violent an impression, probably means no more than that Burns had damaged himself with drink. That much Burns admitted time and again ; and Currie—who cannot but have got his information from Maxwell—remarks that for over a year before the end 'there was an evident decline of our Poet's personal appearance, and, though his appetite continued unimpaired, he was himself sensible that his constitution was sinking.' It was all, the doctor thought, the effect of alcohol on a difficult digestion and a sensitive nervous system ; and, though he was something of a fanatic in this matter, I see no reason, as he was also an honest man, to question his diagnosis.

ROBERT BURNS

that he left the world at the right moment for himself and for his fame.

There is small doubt that the report of his misconduct was at best unkindly framed ; there is none that certain among his apologists have gone a very great deal too far in the opposite direction. We may credit Findlater, for instance, but it is impossible, having any knowledge of the man, to believe in the kind of Exciseman-Saint of Gray : impeccable in all the relations of life and never the worse for liquor : even as it is impossible to believe in the *bourgeois* Burns of the latest apotheosis. As Lockhart says, the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes ; and one is glad to agree with Lockhart. Even so, however, tradition, as reported by friends and enemies alike, runs stronger in his disfavour than it does the other way.¹ And, though we know that party feeling ran high in Dumfries, and that Burns—with his stiff neck, and his notable distinction, and his absolute gift of speech—did

The poet's
apologists.

¹ 'We are raising a subscription (horrid word) '—(thus Sir Walter, to Morritt, 15th January 1814)—'for a monument to Burns, an honour long delayed, perhaps till some parts of his character were forgotten by those among whom he lived.' This was written within twenty years of Burns's death : when the grievance of the Revolution was lost in the shadow cast by the tremendous presence of Napoleon. And, if it be urged that Burns's offending against Toryism must have been rank indeed to be recalled thus bitterly and thus late, it may be retorted that by no possibility can it have been an hundredth part so indecent as the conduct of the Parliamentary Whigs during the life and long after the death of Pitt. Of all men living Burns was entitled to an opinion ; of all men living he had the best gift of expression. Well, he had his opinion, and he used his gift ; and Dumfries could not forgive him. It is again a question of circumstances. Fox and the rest were honoured Members of His Majesty's Opposition. Burns was only an exciseman.

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certainly damn himself in the eyes of many by what, in the circumstances, must have seemed a suicidal intemperance of feeling and expression, we know also that, once extremely popular, he was presently cut by Dumfries society ; that after a time his reputation was an indifferent one on other counts than politics ; and that more than once—as in the case of Mrs. Riddell, and again, when he had to apologise for a toast no reasonable or well-bred man would have proposed in the presence of a King's officer, unless he were prepared to face the consequences—he behaved himself ill, according to the standard of good manners then and now. The explanation in these and other cases is that he was drunk ; and, as matter of fact, drink and disappointment were pretty certainly responsible between them for the mingled squalor and gloom and pathos of the end. There is nothing like liquor to make a strong man vain of his strength and jealous of his prerogative—even while it is stealing both away ; and there is nothing like disappointment to confirm such a man in a friendship for liquor. Last of all, there needs but little knowledge of character and life to see that to apologise for Burns is vain : that we must accept him frankly and without reserve for a peasant of genius perverted from his peasanthood, thrust into a place for which his peasanthood and his genius alike unfitted him, denied a perfect opportunity, constrained to live his qualities into defects, and in the long-run beaten by a sterile and unnatural environment. We cannot make him other than he was, and, especially, we cannot make him a man of our own time : a man born tame and civil

The pathos
of the end.

ROBERT BURNS

and unexcessive—‘he that died o’ Wednesday,’ and had obituary notices in local prints. His elements are all-too gross, are all-too vigorous and turbulent for that. ‘God have mercy on me,’ he once wrote of himself, ‘a poor damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! the sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imaginations, agonising sensibility and bedlam passions.’ Plainly he knew himself as his apologists have never known him, nor will ever know.

That his intellectual and temperamental endowment was magnificent we know by the way in which he affected his contemporaries, and through the terms in which some of them—Robertson, Heron, Dugald Stewart, and, especially, Maria Riddell—recorded their impression of him ; yet we know also that, for all his magnificence, or, as I prefer to think, by reason of its magnificence, it could not save him from defeat and shame. Where was the lesion? What was the secret of his fall? Lord Rosebery, as I believe, has hit the white in saying that he was ‘great in his strength and great in his weaknesses.’¹ His master-qualities, this critic very justly notes, were ‘inspiration and sympathy.’ But if I would add ‘and character’—which, to be sure, is largely an effect of conditions—how must the commentary run? There is pride—the pride of Lucifer : what did it spare him in the end? There is well-nigh the finest brain conceivable ; yet is there a

His magnificent endowment.

¹ I note with pleasure that Lord Rosebery knows too much of life, and is too good a judge of evidence, to think of putting a new complexion on the facts of these last, unhappy years. But has he been explanatory enough? What, after all, but failure is possible for strength misplaced and misapplied?

ESSAYS

A 'Son of
Sedition.'

certain curious intolerance of facts which obliges the owner of that brain, being a Government officer and seeing his sole future in promotion, to flaunt a friendship with roaring Jacobins like Maxwell and Syme, and get himself nicknamed a 'Son of Sedition,' and have it reported of him, rightly or not, that he has publicly avowed disloyalty at the local theatre.¹ There is a passionate regard for women; with, as Sir Walter noted, a lack of chivalry which is attested by those lampoons on living Mrs. Riddell and on dead Mrs. Oswald. There is the strongest sense of fatherhood with the tenderest concern for 'weans and wife'; and there is that resolve for pleasure which not even these uplifting influences can check. There is a noble generosity of heart and temper; but there is so imperfect a sense of conduct, so practical and so habitual a faith in a certain theory:—

'The heart ay's the part ay,
That maks us richt or wrang':—

that in the end you have a broken reputation, and death at seven or eight and thirty, the effect of a variety of discrediting causes. Taking the precisian's point of view, one might describe so extraordinary a blend of differences as a bad, well-

¹ I do not for an instant forget that here is more circumstance: that he was a true Briton at heart, and that in the beginning his Jacobinism was chiefly, if not solely, an effect of sympathy with a tortured people. But there are ways and ways of favouring an unpopular cause; and Burns's were alike defiant and unwise. Thus Maxwell was practically what most people then called a 'murderer'—of the French King; yet it was while, or soon after, the enormities of the Terror were at their worst, that he became a chief associate of Burns. To some this seems a 'noble imprudence.' Was it not rather pure incontinence of self?

ROBERT BURNS

meaning man, and one might easily defend the description. But the precisian has naught to do at this grave-side ; and to most of us now it is history that, while there was an infinite deal of the best sort of good in Burns, the bad in him, being largely compacted of such purely unessential defects as arrogance, petulance, imprudence, and a turn for self-indulgence, this last exasperated by the conditions in which his lot was cast, was not of the worst kind after all. Yet the bad was bad enough to wreck the good. The little foxes were many and active and greedy enough to spoil a world of grapes. The strength was great, but the weaknesses were greater; for time and chance and necessity were ever developing the weaknesses at the same time that they were ever beating down the strength. That is the sole conclusion possible. And to the plea, that the story it rounds is very pitiful, there is this victorious answer :—that the Man had drunk his life to the lees, while the Poet had fulfilled himself to the accomplishing of a peculiar immortality ; so that to Burns Death came as a deliverer and a friend.

The good
and the bad.

BYRON'S WORLD

Henry
Angelo.

HENRY'S father, Domenico Malevoli Tremamundo ANGELO, a renowned professor of equitation and the sword, was an *ami intime* of Peg Woffington, who fell in love with him—(so Henry says)—at a fencing-match, and whirled him off to England in her own carriage. Here he taught the *manège* and the use of the *arme blanche*, patronised the arts, was everybody's friend, married the daughter of 'Captain Masters, Commander of the *Chester* frigate,' lived honourably, and died when he was eighty-seven, leaving his son (whom he had sent to Eton and to Paris) to reign in his stead. Like Domenico, Henry taught everybody fencing, and knew everybody worth knowing. He had, too, a talent for acting and the singing of comic songs, and he played much at Wargrave with Hell-Gate Barrymore and his following, and in London with the Margravine of Anspach. An old schoolmate (Dublin) of R. B. Sheridan's, who learned the sword of him, he was particularly associated with Bannister the actor, Rowlandson the caricaturist, Jackson the pugilist (with whom he had rooms in Bond Street), and Bate Dudley, the Fighting Parson; fenced regularly with Edmund Kean; was able to bet fifty

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pounds that he had dined at the same table with the Prince of Wales ('twas in 1806, at the Neapolitan Club), and to win his wager on the authority of 'Anacreon Moore'; and was, in short, as jovial, buxom, and flourishing a blade as his state in society could show. His acquaintance with Byron began at Harrow ('From his Lordship's affability and pleasant manners I knew more of him than of many I attended there at the time'); and at the Albany, years afterwards, he used to play single-stick daily (at half a guinea a lesson) with the poet, for the express purpose of giving his pupil 'a fine breathing sweat,' and taking down his fat. Angelo has several stories to tell of Byron:—how he (Angelo) hunted down a quotation for him, and so enabled him to win a bet; how they met at Newmarket the day that Captain Barclay walked his match with Wood, and how Byron drove him to Cambridge (Theodore Hook was of the party), gave him dinner, saw him and Hook to the coach, and 'sent to St. John's College for the good beer it was noted for, when, filling two tumblers, he handed them up himself to us, laughing at the many people who were wondering at his being so very busy waiting on the outside passengers'; how Byron 'gave me an order on Mr. Murray (whom I had first the pleasure of knowing near forty years since, when at the Rev. Dr. Thompson's, Kensington) for several of his books, *Childe Harold*, etc.,' . . . and 'I did not at the time request his signature on the title-page'; how 'I,' Henry Angelo, collected portraits of pugilists and players, from Slack and Betterton downwards, and therewith composed him a certain

Henry
Angelo.

ESSAYS

Henry
Angelo.

famous screen, which John Murray the Second bought at the sale in Piccadilly, and which abides in Albemarle Street unto this day. On the whole, Angelo retained so good and moving a memory of his pupil that he cannot recall that time at Cambridge, the 'pleasure' of which was so 'greatly enhanced' by Lord Byron's 'affability and cordial reception,' without a little attempt at the *cri du cœur* and the *note émue*. 'What must be my feelings now,' he writes (1830), 'when recollecting the scene of that evening—his obliging condescension, our parting, the coach driving off, his huzzas, and the twisting of his hat! Such feelings can never be obliterated.' In effect, *Sunt lacrimae rerum*. . . .

Byron's
mother.

My amiable Aleto:—BYRON'S MOTHER, who at this time had taken to the use of fireirons as a means of marking her sense of displeasure with her son. She was Catherine, only Child and heiress of George Gordon of Gight, and she married John Byron, in 1785, the year after the death of his first wife, Amelia d'Arcy, Baroness Conyers, a daughter of the fourth Earl of Holderness, with whom, as Marchioness of Carmarthen, he had eloped some years before. In person she was dumpy and plain, in disposition passionate, in temper furious and tyrannical, in mind a superstitious dullard, and in manners a naturally awkward and untrained provincial. But she was a fortune; and John Byron, a handsome scamp, who was head over ears in debt, had small difficulty in making her and her money his own. This, from what Moore calls 'an

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authentic source' (it reads like the family lawyer),^{Byron's mother.} is how he carried out his part of the marriage contract:—

'At the time of the marriage, Miss Gordon was possessed of about £3000 in money, two shares of the Aberdeen Banking Company, the estates of Gight and Monkshill, and the superiority of two salmon-fishings on Dee. Soon after the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Byron Gordon in Scotland, it appeared that Mr. Byron had involved himself very deeply in debt, and his creditors commenced legal proceedings for the recovery of their money. The cash in hand was soon paid away,—the bank shares were disposed of at £600 (now worth £5000)—timber on the estate was cut down and sold to the amount of £1500—the farm of Monkshill and superiority of the fishings, affording a freehold qualification, were disposed of at £480; and, in addition to these sales, within a year after the marriage, £8000 was borrowed upon a mortgage on the estate, granted by Mrs. Byron Gordon to the person who lent the money. In March 1786 a contract of marriage in the Scotch form was drawn up and signed by the parties. In the course of the summer of that year Mr. and Mrs. Byron left Gight, and never returned to it; the estate being, in the following year, sold to Lord Haddo for the sum of £17,850, the whole of which was applied to the payment of Mr. Byron's debts, with the exception of £1122, which remained as a burden on the estate (the interest to be applied to paying a jointure of £55, 11s. 1d. to Mrs. Byron's grandmother, the principal reverting, at her death, to Mrs. Byron), and £3000 vested in trustees for Mrs. Byron's separate use, which was lent to Mr. Carsewell of Ratharlet, in Fifeshire.'

In the summer of 1786 she accompanied her husband to France; and, returning to England towards the end of 1787, took a furnished house in Holles Street, and there gave birth to her only child in the late January of 1788. From London she went to

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Byron's
mother.

Aberdeen, where she was presently joined by Captain Byron. Of course they could not agree ; and, after an attempt at life in separate lodgings (at opposite ends of the same street), during which they visited and took tea together, they ceased from speaking, and John Byron, who simply wanted her money, soon left for London. He returned in no great while, and, having squeezed her to the amount of a few pounds more, again departed, and died the next year (1791) at Valenciennes : leaving his foolish, ill-bred, ill-conditioned, ill-served, yet adoring widow to expend the full amount of her very emotional temperament and habit on the 'lame brat,' their child. He was a lively boy, but very sensitive and shy, and 'in my sullen moods . . . a devil.' What chance had such a son with such a mother? With him, it is told on first-hand authority, 'she would pass from passionate caresses to the actual repulsion of disgust,' and 'the next moment she would devour him with kisses again, and swear his eyes were as beautiful as his father's.' In 1798, on Byron's accession to the title, the pair removed to Newstead ; and there she placed her son in the hands of an ignoble quacksalver, whose treatment of the poor boy's malformation—(it consisted chiefly in twisting and wrenching the foot, and in screwing it up in a wooden engine)—inflicted on him many hours of futile and excruciating agony. By the summer of 1799, however, it was borne in upon her, 'daft Gordon' as she was, that the practice of this ignorant brute had failed ; so she removed to London, took a house in Sloane Terrace, gave her son to the care of Dr. Baillie, and

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—having been placed, for some occult reason, on the Civil List for a pension of £300 a year—sent him to a private school at Dulwich. At Dulwich Byron might have done well enough, had he been left alone ; but patience and tact and self-restraint were not in his mother's nature. She disgusted Lord Carlisle, who was her son's guardian, so that in no great while that highly respectable nobleman was moved to wash his hands of both his ward and his ward's mother ; while, as for the Dulwich school, she so exerted her ill-timed and capricious fondness that, when Byron left it for Harrow, he was, says the kindly and painstaking Glennie, 'as little prepared as it is natural to suppose from two years of elementary instruction, thwarted by every art that could estrange the mind of youth from preceptor, from school, and from serious study.' Years wrought no change, save for the worse, in her ; and though Byron, by 1806, had contrived to get his own temper fairly well in hand, and was often able to listen to her rants in silence, the scenes between them were many and painful (the comic aspect of the situation is presented with admirable wit and tact in Disraeli's *Venetia*). 'It is told,' says Moore, 'as a curious proof of their opinions of each other's violence, that, after parting one evening in a tempest of this kind, they were known each to go privately that night to the apothecary's, inquiring anxiously whether the other had been to purchase poison, and cautioning the vendor of drugs not to attend to such an application, if made.' On the present occasion, as we have seen, Byron took refuge in flight.

Byron's
mother.

ESSAYS

Byron's
mother.

Mrs. Byron died at Newstead—which her son had appropriated ‘almost exclusively’ to her use, and to which he insisted on coming as a guest—in the July of 1811. She had grown extremely corpulent, and had been ‘of late indisposed, but not to any alarming degree’; when (so Moore reports) ‘a fit of rage, brought on . . . by reading over the upholsterer’s bills, was the ultimate cause of her death.’ The *Volage* had landed Byron but a very few days before the news of her seizure was conveyed to him; but he reached Newstead too late to see her again in life. On the morning of the funeral he boxed, they say, with Rushton. But everybody has his way of working off an emotion. And Byron, despite the extraordinary quality of his relations with his mother, was passionately grieved by her loss. It was with many tears that he told her maid, who found him watching beside the bed of death, that he ‘had but one friend in the world, and she was gone.’ And there can be no manner of doubt that Mrs. Byron was immensely fond of him in her way, at the same time that in her way she was immensely proud of him.

R. C.
Dallas.

ROBERT CHARLES DALLAS (1754-1824), ‘author’ (Moore says) ‘of some novels, popular, I believe, in their day,’ was the son of a doctor, was born at Dallas Castle, and was educated at Musselburgh and at Kingston (under James Elphinstone). He read law at the Inner Temple; but, on attaining his majority, he went to Jamaica, where he had property, and for some time lived there and in the

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U.S.A. Returning to England, he turned author, and published *Miscellaneous Writings* (1797: 'Consisting of *Poems* ; *Lucretia*, a Tragedy ; and *Moral Essays*, with a Vocabulary of the Passions') ; *Percival, or Nature Vindicated* (1801), a novel ; *Elements of Self-Knowledge* (1802) ; *Aubrey* (1804) ; *Tales Illustrative of the Simple and the Surprising* (1805) ; and much else. He was a sort of connexion ('Captain George Anson Byron of the Royal Navy, father of the present Lord Byron, had married a sister of Mr. Dallas.'—MOORE) ; and at this time he introduced himself to Byron's notice in a solemn letter about *Hours of Idleness* : a letter in which he cited, being aggressively, and even ponderously, moral, the good Lord Lyttelton as an example and the wicked Lord Lyttelton as the other thing, and wrote himself down generally the well-meaning, officious, wordy, pompous, and extremely self-satisfied person he was. Byron replied—delighted to be taken seriously, yet with his tongue most plainly in his cheek ; and Dallas was presently privileged to assist in the publication of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Four years after, on Byron's return from the East, Dallas was still further privileged, and assisted in the publication of *Childe Harold*, which Byron gave him, and on which he received the profits (£800), as he presently received, in the same way, the profits on *The Corsair* (1813). Then the pair drifted apart ; and after Missolonghi Dallas produced an account of Byron against which Hanson and Hobhouse, the poet's executors, procured an injunction, on the strength of certain letters to the Hon. Mrs. Byron which

R. C.
Dallas.

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R. C.
Dallas.

were set forth in its pages. This was just before Dallas's death, when the book was republished in Paris (1824), as *Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron from the Year 1808 to the end of 1814*.

William
Harness.

WILLIAM HARNESS (1790-1869) was Byron's junior at Harrow. Harness was weak and lame when he entered the school ; and Byron fought his battles for him. They fell out, but were reconciled : so that Byron was moved to dedicate the First and Second *Harold* to him, but did not 'for fear it should injure him in his profession.' Writing some years after Harrow, Byron speaks thus of both the estrangement and the friendship :—' We both seem perfectly to recollect, with a mixture of pleasure and regret, the hours we once passed together, and I assure you, most sincerely, they are numbered among the happiest of my brief chronicle of enjoyment. I am now *getting into years*, that is to say, I was *twenty* a month ago, and another year will send me into the world to run my career of folly with the rest. I was then just fourteen,—you were almost the first of my Harrow friends, certainly the *first* in my esteem, if not in date ; but an absence from Harrow for some time, shortly after, and new connexions on your side, and the difference in our conduct (an advantage decidedly in your favour) from that turbulent and riotous disposition of mine, which impelled me into every species of mischief,—all these circumstances combined to destroy an intimacy, which affection urged me to continue, and memory compels me to regret. But there is not a

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circumstance attending that period, hardly a sentence we exchanged, which is not impressed on my mind at this moment. I need not say more,—this assurance alone must convince you, had I considered them as trivial, they would have been less indelible. How well I recollect the perusal of your “first flights”! There is another circumstance you do not know; the *first lines* I ever attempted at Harrow were addressed to *you*. You were to have seen them; but Sinclair had the copy in his possession when we went home;—and, on our return, we were *strangers*. They were destroyed, and certainly no great loss; but you will perceive from this circumstance my opinions at an age when we cannot be hypocrites. I have dwelt longer on this theme than I intended, and I shall now conclude with what I ought to have begun. We were once friends,—nay, we have always been so, for our separation was the effect of chance, not of dissension. I do not know how far our destinations in life may throw us together, but if opportunity and inclination allow you to waste a thought on such a harebrained being as myself, you will find me at least sincere, and not so bigoted to my faults as to involve others in the consequences. Will you sometimes write to me? I do not ask it often; and if we meet, let us be what we *should* be, and what we *were*.’—(MOORE.)

In a letter to Moore, written after Byron's death, Harness gives this pleasant and particular account of their friendship:—‘A coolness afterwards arose, which Byron alludes to in the first of the accompanying letters, and we never spoke during the last year of his remaining at school, nor till after the

William
Harness.

ESSAYS

William
Harness.

publication of his *Hours of Idleness*. Lord Byron was then at Cambridge; I, in one of the upper forms at Harrow. In an English theme I happened to quote from the volume and mention it with praise. It was reported to Byron that I had, on the contrary, spoken slightly of his work and of himself, for the purpose of conciliating the favour of Dr. Butler, the master, who had been severely satirised in one of the poems. Wingfield, who was afterwards Lord Powerscourt, a mutual friend of Byron and myself, disabused him of the error into which he had been led, and this was the occasion of the first letter of the collection. Our intimacy was renewed, and continued from that time till his going abroad. Whatever faults Lord Byron might have had towards others, to myself he was always uniformly affectionate. I have many slights and neglects towards him to reproach myself with; but I cannot call to mind a single instance of caprice or unkindness, in the whole course of our friendship, to allege against him.'

In effect, Harness was one of the friends whose portraits Byron had painted by Sanders ere his departure for the East. He remembered the Harrow days so well that at Rogers's table he was able to quote to Moore, who was then (1828-29) engaged upon the *Life and Letters*, such a 'strain of unpremeditated art' as this of Byron's, 'roared out' at a schoolmate who was a violent Bonapartist:—

Bold Robert Speer was Bony's bad precursor.
Bob was a bloody dog, but Bonaparte a worser.

He visited at Newstead in 1812, when Byron was

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correcting the proofs of the First and Second *Harold*. There he met Francis Hodgson, who was William Harness.
'at work in getting out the ensuing number of *The Monthly Review*,' and for three weeks—weeks of late hours at both ends of the day—'the general talk was of poets and poetry, and who could or who could not write,' though it occasionally 'strayed into very serious discussions on religion.' In due course Harness took orders and a country curacy; but Byron was never afraid of the cloth—(conspicuous among his early friends are Becher, Harness, Hodgson, and Drury, parsons all)—and the intimacy continued unimpaired till 1816 and the Exile, after which it died a natural death. Harness, a person of elegant taste, had always found Byron's poetry 'a little too "strong" for him'; being Boyle Lecturer at Cambridge, he took occasion to speak of *Cain* as he thought it deserved; and two years after came the end. But though he found Byron's Venetian life still 'stronger' than Byron's poetry, he never ceased from being Byron's champion; and the few pages in which he discusses the Marriage, and the Separation, and the Characters of the parties thereto, are uncompromisingly Byronian, at the same time that they are sane and liberal enough to make you wish that he had written many more.

For the rest, he lived an active, blameless, useful life: as minister (1825) of Regent Square Chapel, St. Pancras, where he stayed for twenty years; as Morning Preacher at Trinity Chapel, Conduit Street, and Minister and Evening Lecturer at St. Ann's, Soho; and as Minister of Brompton Chapel, in which capacity he compassed the building of All

ESSAYS

William
Harness.

Souls', Knightsbridge. He edited Shakespeare and Massinger, wrote much for *Blackwood*, and published a certain amount of timid, unexceptionable verse. Moreover, being extremely popular as a preacher, and withal 'a gentleman of the Old School,' he went everywhere and saw everybody. His lifelong friend (they knew each other as babies) was Mary Russell Mitford, whose *Life* he lived to write ; but Sir Walter, Crabbe, Rogers, Sydney Smith, the Kembles, the Derbys, the Lansdownes, Daniel Webster, Washington Irving, the Berrys, Lydia White, Father Mathew, Talfourd, Joanna Baillie, Milman, Dickens, Thackeray, Crabb Robinson—at one or the other time he knew them all. In the end, being very old, he fell down a stone stair in the Deanery at Battle, and was taken up dead.

Lord
Holland.

HENRY RICHARD VASSALL FOX, Third Baron Holland, a nephew of Charles James Fox (1773-1840), was educated at Eton and Oxford. In 1797 he married Elizabeth Vassall, the divorced wife of Sir Godfrey Webster, to whom he had already paid £6000 damages as defendant in an action for *crim. con.* The 'constant protector of all oppressed races and persecuted sects' (MACAULAY), he did good work against the Slave-Trade, the Corn Laws, and the Criminal Code ; took the other side in the matter of the War and the isolation of Napoleon ; and served on the Ministries of Earl Grey and Lord Melbourne. Also, he wrote gracefully about Spanish literature and his uncle Fox, and edited the

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Waldegrave *Memoirs*. A good talker, a capital Lord
mimic, an engaging and accomplished host, to Holland.
Sheridan he is 'the only public man I have any
attachment for'; his Holland House parties are
historical; and in 1833 Ticknor 'cannot help agreeing
with Scott that he is the most agreeable man I
have ever met,' the reason being that 'to the great
resources of his knowledge he adds a *laissez-aller*,
arising from his remarkable good-nature which is
irresistible.' Of Lord Holland in Parliament,
Holcroft, writing in 1799, remarks that 'He has
not sufficient vehemence of feeling to become a man
of genius'; while to Byron (1813) he is 'impressive
from sense and sincerity.' As we shall see, Byron
believed himself justified in what he wrote to Becher
(that the Edinburgh Reviewers never praise except
the partisans of Lord Holland and Co.), and in the
Text and Notes of *English Bards* he trounced the
Holland House set with all the strength that was in
him. Afterwards, being convinced of his error, he
was on excellent terms with Lord Holland, to whom
he was introduced by Rogers, and to whom he
dedicated *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), 'With
Every Sentiment of Regard and Respect.'

THIS WAS SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT (1749-1814). Pratt, the
Born at St. Ives (Bucks), he began, it appears, as a Gleaner.
parson, but, getting into trouble over women, and
quarrelling with his parents, he turned actor, playing
under the noble name of Courtney Melmoth in
Dublin, and failing (1774) at Covent Garden in
Hamlet and in Philaster. After this he took to

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Pratt, the
Gleaner.

scribbling—still as Courtney Melmoth ; went into partnership (c. 1776) with a Bath bookseller named Clinch ; and coming to London some time afterwards, fell in with Wolcot, Beattie, Colman, and Æschylus Potter, and took so valiantly to scribbling prose and verse that three columns of the British Museum Catalogue are filled with the titles of his works : among them *Sympathy : a Poem* (1788), of which there were four editions within the year, and eleven by 1807 ; *The Pupils of Pleasure* (1776), translated into French and German, and abused as ‘licentious’ ; *The Fair Circassian* (1781), a play which, as acted by Miss Farren, afterwards Countess of Derby, went through three editions within the year ; and *Gleanings in England* (1799), which is trounced in a letter by Charles Lamb. He is best remembered as the discoverer of Blackett, the cobbler-bard, of whom he published *Specimens* in 1809 and the *Remains* in 1811.

In the MS. of *English Bards* Pratt is thus presented :—

In verse most stale, unprofitable, flat,
Come let us change the scene and ‘glean’ with Pratt ;
In him an author’s luckless lot behold,
Condemned to make the books which once he sold :
Degraded Man ! again resume thy trade—
The votaries of the Muse are ill-repaid,
Though daily puffs once more invite to buy
A new edition of thy *Sympathy*.

But the engaging Dallas, who was a personal friend, prevailed upon the writer to suppress his verses, together with a rider in prose :—‘Mr. Pratt, once a Bath bookseller, now a London author, has written

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as much, to as little purpose, as any of his scribbling contemporaries. Mr. P.'s *Sympathy* is in rhyme ; but his prose productions are the most voluminous.' Pratt, the Gleaner.

JOHN JACKSON (1759-1845), better known as Gentleman Jackson, 'Sole Prop and Ornament of Pugilism' (MOORE), was Champion of England from 1795 to 1803, when he retired. The son of that London builder, 'by whom the arch was thrown over the old Fleet Ditch,' Jackson was backed by Harvey Combe, Lord Mayor, and four times member for the City of London, and fought no more than thrice in the Ring:—in 1788, when he beat Fewteral of Birmingham at Smithson Bottom, near Croydon, in the presence of the Prince of Wales ; in 1789, when he was beaten by the Brewer of Inglesdon, who threw him so heavily as to dislocate his ankle and break the small bone of an arm ; and in 1795, when at Hornchurch, Essex, he beat the renowned Mendoza in ten and a half minutes. Yet for over thirty years he was the most picturesque and commanding figure in the sporting-world, and exercised an influence unique in its annals. The truth is, he was a vast deal more than an accomplished boxer and teacher of boxing and a brilliant all-round athlete. He was also a man of character and integrity—polite, agreeable, reputable, a capital talker, a person of tact and energy and charm. It was at his rooms in Bond Street—('long the most attractive lounge in the West End')—that the Pugilistic Club was founded (1814), which was to

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Gentleman the Ring, for the ten or a dozen years of its
 Jackson. authority, what the M.C.C. is to the world of cricket now ; no mill of moment was possible unless he held the watch or served as referee ; he instituted the practice of making a purse for the beaten man, and generally took round the hat himself ; he selected and commanded the body of pugilists—Spring, Cribb, Tom Belcher, Richmond, Tom Oliver, and the rest—which kept order at the Coronation of George IV. Byron had always a great regard for Jackson ; walked with him at Cambridge, and told an excited remonstrant that ‘ Jackson’s manners are infinitely superior to those of the fellows of my college whom I meet at the high table ’ (J. W. CLARK) ; had him to stay at Newstead and at Brighton (always paying the chaise both ways) ; wrote him friendly letters ; and, as late as 1823, described him in a note to *Don Juan* (xi. 19) as ‘ my old friend and corporeal pastor and master, John Jackson, Esq.’—(he was always Mr. Jackson to the Profession and the Press, just as—so ’tis said—a late political leader was always ‘ MR. Parnell ’ to the members of his party)—and hoped that he ‘ still retained the strength and symmetry of his model of a form, together with his good humour and athletic as well as mental accomplishments.’ And two years before Byron wrote thus, Pierce Egan notes, with all his wonted enthusiasm in the matter of fancy types, that ‘ MR. JOHN JACKSON still continues to increase in the estimation of the *Fancy* in general, at his rooms, No. 13 Bond Street, London, INDEPENDENT OF ALL PARTIES, yet whose most anxious endeavour is to please all parties from the

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highest to the lowest connected with the Prize Ring.' In 1820 Jackson was presented with 'a Gentleman Jackson. service of plate of the most magnificent description . . . to which all ranks contributed, from the prince to the prize-fighter.' In 1824 he gave up his Rooms, 'and retired into private life, occupying a house in Grosvenor Street West, where he still (1841) resides, enjoying the unabated confidence of his old friends.' A great monument—a couchant lion and a naked athlete (weeping)—subscribed by his pupils, marks his place in Brompton Cemetery.

In 1818, when Moore wanted to get up the slang of the Fancy for *Tom Cribb's Memorial* (of which 2000 copies were sold in less than a week), Scrope Davies asked him to meet Jackson at dinner, and told him that his opposite was making £1000 a year by teaching the use of 'the raw uns' through the gloves. Moore 'got very little out of' his fellow-guest (he really learned his flash from the ass, Pierce Egan), but promised to go with Jackson and Davies to see the fight between Turner and the Nonpareil at Crawley Downs (4th December 1818). Thus does he tell the tale:—'Breakfasted with Davies at seven. Walked to Jackson's house in Grosvenor Street; a very neat establishment for a boxer. Were off in our chaise at eight. The immense crowds of carriages, pedestrians, *etc.*, all along the road—the respect paid to Jackson everywhere highly comical. He sung some flash songs'—(his own *On the High-Toby Spice Flash the Muzzle*, no doubt, among them)—'on the way, and I contrived to muster up one or two myself, much

ESSAYS

Gentleman to Scrope Davies's surprise and diversion. The
Jackson. scene of action beyond Crawley, thirty-two miles from town ; the combatants Randall and Turner, the former an Irishman, which was lucky, as it gave me some sort of interest in the contest. The thing altogether not so horrid as I expected.' (It lasted two hours and twenty minutes, and Keats, who saw it, 'tapped his fingers on the window pane,' to give Cowden Clarke an idea of the rapidity of the Nonpareil's hits.) 'Turner's face was a good deal de-humanised, but Randall the conqueror had hardly a scratch. . . . A beautiful sunshine broke out . . . and *had there been a proportionate mixture of women in the immense ring formed by the crowd, it would have been a very brilliant spectacle.*'

To be done with Jackson :—He 'showed me' (MOORE, 23rd Feb. 1828) two or three letters of Lord B., which I copied out. Said he had often seen B.'s foot, which had been turned round with instruments, the limb altogether a little wasted ; could run very fast. In talking of his courage, said nobody could be more fearless ; showed great spirit always 'in coming up to the blows.'

Francis
Hodgson.

FRANCIS HODGSON (1781-1852) was the son of James Hodgson, Rector of Keston, and Master (by the grace of Jenkinson, first Lord Liverpool) of Whitgift's foundation at Croydon. Here he learned his rudiments ; and in 1794 he was sent to Eton, where he had for schoolfellows Henry Drury, Scrope Davies, Charles Skinner Matthews, Sumner, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and William

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Lamb, afterwards Lord Melbourne. In 1799 he went (naturally) to King's, and there he foregathered with Denman, Merivale, and Robert Bland. In 1806 he got a mastership at Eton; and from 1808 to 1814 he was a tutor at King's. He appears to have fallen in with Byron in 1807, and the friendship grew apace, till in 1809 you find him a guest at Newstead. Like most of the Byron set, and to a greater degree than any but Byron himself, he was fluent in rhyme. One of his critics remarks that he 'literally appears to think in verse'; he certainly 'dropped into poetry' with an ease and with an air which must have been uncommon even in that scribbling age; and in this same year, having already translated Juvenal (1807), and been pleasantly contrasted with Gifford, and done a great deal of reviewing for the *Critical* and the *Monthly*, of which last he was practically Editor, he published his *Lady Jane Grey, a Tale in Two Books: With Miscellaneous Poems in English and Latin*, the harbinger of a whole cloud of published verses, and began to write for the *Quarterly* (Gifford was an old friend of his father's). In this same year, too, he intercepted and detained Moore's challenge to the author of *English Bards*, and made that friendship possible which began (at a dinner at Rogers's) soon after Byron's return. In 1811 he is found calling on his noble friend to cut short his tour and make love and verse at home:—

Return, my Byron, to Britannia's fair,
To that soft pow'r which shares the bliss it yields;
Return to Freedom's pure and vigorous air,
To Love's own groves and Glory's native fields.

ESSAYS

Francis
Hodgson.

The tour being done, he bursts anew into apostrophic song :—

Alone, my Byron, at Harrovian springs—
Yet not alone—thy joyous Hodgson sings, etc.

Indeed, the two were on terms of peculiar intimacy. Hodgson was deeply concerned for Byron's soul, and at Newstead Harness heard him argue for Christianity to such a purpose and in such a spirit that he could not, 'at a distance of more than fifty years,' recall the experience 'without a deep feeling of admiration for the judicious zeal and affectionate earnestness (often speaking with tears in his eyes) which Dr. Hodgson evinced in his advocacy of the truth.' In the same spirit, when Byron found that Hodgson, who had engaged to pay his father's debts, was unable to marry until that engagement was fulfilled, he gave him a thousand pounds, posted to Oxford to see the young lady's mother, and succeeded in making the marriage (1815).

In 1814 Hodgson made the acquaintance of Mrs. Leigh, with whom he was soon on the friendliest and the most confidential terms—they continued till the end—and broke ground with Miss Milbanke by writing to her the particulars of a certain appearance in the Senate House, when Byron was received by the assembled youth with peal on peal of 'the most rapturous applause.' In 1816 he came to London at Mrs. Leigh's request, and wrote twice to Lady Byron in the interest of peace and his friend. It was to no purpose, as we know, and Byron went into banishment. Out of it he writes thus of Hodgson, who had taken orders, and had

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been presented (1816) to the living of Bakewell, in Francis
Hodgson.
Derbyshire—

‘I hear that Hodgson is your neighbour. . . . You will find him an excellent-hearted fellow, as well as one of the cleverest; a little, perhaps, too much japped by preferment in the Church and the tuition of youth, as well as inoculated with the disease of domestic felicity, besides being overrun with fine feelings about women and constancy . . . but otherwise a very worthy man. . . . Pray remember me to him, and say I know not which to envy most—his neighbourhood, him, or you.’

Hodgson on his part, too much japped or not, was ever a devout Byronian. He was one of the mourners at Hucknall, and for some time thought of writing his dead friend's life. He abandoned the idea as soon as he heard that the work had been assigned to Moore, and gave that writer, (who speaks of him with unfailing cordiality, and notes that he is considered ‘a blessing’ to his parish) all the help he could. In 1836 Lord Melbourne offered him the Archdeaconry of Derby; in 1838 he married (his first wife, a sister of Mrs. Henry Drury, had died some five or six years before) a daughter of his old friend Denman; in 1840 he was made Provost of Eton. The story of his work in this last capacity need not here be told. Enough that he died in harness; that he wrote verses (as Byron said he would write verses) ‘to the end of the chapter’; and that he left behind him none but friends or admirers, or both.

THE son of a man of fortune, who contested John Cam
Hobhouse.
Bristol, sat for Grampound, and in 1812 was made

ESSAYS

John Cam
Hobhouse. a baronet, JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE was born at Redland (near Bristol), and was partly educated at a local dissenting school, whence he was sent to Westminster (on the advice of his father's friend, the Marquess of Lansdowne), and so to Trinity College, Cambridge. There he met Byron, and 'after hating me,' the latter writes, 'for two years, because I wore a *white* hat and a *grey* coat, and rode a *grey* horse (as he himself says), took me into his good graces, because I had written some poetry.' At Cambridge, Byron adds, 'he did great things.' That is, 'he founded the Cambridge "Whig Club"'—(this Hobhouse denied with heat, like the good Radical he was)—'and the Amicable Society, which was dissolved in consequence of the members constantly quarrelling, and made himself very popular with "us youth," and no less formidable to all tutors, professors, and heads of colleges.' Being a man of wit and parts, with a genuine tincture of letters, he began, of course, by making verses. The lines on Bowles in the First Edition of *English Bards* are his:—

' Stick to thy sonnets, man !—at least they sell.
Or take the only path that open lies
For modern worthies who would hope to rise :
Fix on some well-known name, and, bit by bit,
Pare off the merits of his worth and wit ;
On each alike employ the critic's knife,
And when a comment fails, prefix a life ;
Hint certain failings, faults before unknown,
Review forgotten lies, and add your own ;
Let no disease, let no misfortune 'scape,
And print, if luckily deform'd, his shape :
Thus shall the world, quite undeceived at last,
Cleave to their present wits, and quit their past ;

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Bards once revered no more with favour view,
But give their modern sonneteers their due ;
Thus with the dead may living merit cope,
Thus Bowles may triumph o'er the shade of Pope ' :—

John Cam
Hobhouse.

and in 1809, he published a certain miscellany—(Skinner Matthews, with whom, as his most intimate friend, he was very often at variance, used to call it the *Miss-sell-any*)—of *Imitations and Translations from the Antient and Modern Classics ; Together with Original Poems Never Before Published*. But from Falmouth onward, despite the desperate terms in which Byron presents him :—

Hobhouse, muttering fearful curses,
As the hatchway down he rolls,
Now his breakfast, now his verses,
Vomits forth, and d——ns our souls :—

he appears to have left rhyme to his friend ; for he set forth the results of their expedition, as he perceived them, in a solid volume of stout and serviceable prose. This was the book now known as *Travels in Albania, Roumelia, and Other Provinces of Turkey* (1812), which went into a Second Edition in a year or so, and was reprinted in 1855. A constant guest at Newstead, he was present (as best man) at the Marriage (2nd January 1815 : it was to him that the bride addressed the often-quoted 'If I am not happy, it will be my own fault') ; and he served his friend most loyally through those troubled and desperate days which preceded the Exile (25th April 1816). In the summer of the same year he joined that friend at Diodati ; and some circumstances of their life are set forth in the *Swiss Journal*—(addressed to Augusta Leigh)—

ESSAYS

John Cam
Hobhouse.

extracts from which were published by Moore. (It was at this time that, as he tells you at the very outset of his *Italy* (1859), he saw Byron 'deface with great care' the 'atheist and philanthropist written in Greek,' which Shelley had inscribed after his own name in an inn-album.) In 1817, after a round of travel, he rejoined Byron at La Mira, and found him deep in the Fourth *Harold*. 'It'—the first draft—'was much shorter than it afterwards became, and it did not remark on several objects which appeared to me peculiarly worthy of notice. I made a list of these objects, and, in conversation with him, gave him reasons for the selection. The result was the poem as it now appears, and he then engaged me to write notes for the whole canto.' Most of this work was done at Venice—'Where I had the advantage of consulting the Ducal Library'; and in the sequel the commentary grew to so great a bulk that only a part could be attached to the poem, the rest of it being published separately (*Historical Illustrations to the Fourth Canto of 'Childe Harold'; Containing Dissertations on the Ruins of Rome, and an Essay on Italian Literature*, London, 1818). Byron's regard for the writer was instantly attested by his Dedication (2nd January 1818) of his magnificent achievement 'to one whom I have known long and accompanied far, whom I have found wakeful over my sickness and kind in my sorrow, glad in my prosperity and firm in my adversity, true in counsel and trusty in peril—to a friend often tried and never found wanting;—to' John Cam Hobhouse, already (1816) the dedicatee of *The Siege of Corinth*.

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There was another meeting (at Pisa) in 1822. John Cam
Hobhouse. These were the years of *Cain*, the *Vision*, the *Juan* (Hobhouse was one of that 'cursed puritanical committee' which on moral grounds objected to the publication of this last), *Missolonghi*; and then, in the July of 1824, he, as Byron's intimate and executor, took a boat, and boarded the *Florida* in Sandgate Creek. 'Three dogs' (he writes) 'that had belonged to my friend were playing on the deck. I could hardly bear to look at them. . . . I cannot describe what I felt during the five or six hours of our passage. I was the last person who shook hands with Byron when he left England in 1816. I recollected his waving his cap to me, as the packet bounded off on a curling wave, from the pier-head at Dover, and here I was now coming back to England with his corpse.' It was John Murray, not Hobhouse himself, who, writing in Hobhouse's name and without Hobhouse's instructions, was politely snubbed by Dean Ireland in the matter of a place for Byron in the Abbey among his peers. But Hobhouse was responsible for all the other circumstances of the obsequies: from the disembarkation of the coffin at the London Docks Buoy—('There were many boats round the ship . . . and the shore was crowded with spectators')—and the passage of the barge to Westminster Stairs, to the deposition in the little church at Hucknall Torkard, which, with the churchyard, was 'so crowded that we could scarcely follow the body up the aisle.' ('I was told,' he adds, 'that the place was crowded till a late hour in the evening, and that the vault was not closed till the next morning.') When he left Hucknall

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John Cam
Hobhouse.

Torkard the Corporation of Nottingham offered him the freedom of the city ; but ‘I had no inclination for the ceremonies with which the acceptance of the honour,’ etc., and ‘I therefore declined it.’

And his work as Byron’s friend and champion was in nowise done when he turned his back upon Hucknall Churchyard. He took part in that very scandalous incident in the story of Westminster Abbey—the closing of its doors upon the effigies of perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most famous, Englishman of his generation. Hobhouse, then, was largely instrumental in forming a Committee, and in procuring subscriptions, for the erection of a memorial to Byron ; and among those associated with him to this end were Goethe, Scott, Campbell, Rogers, Moore, Malcolm, Lockhart, Bowles, Mackintosh, Jeffrey, Stratford Canning, Charles Kemble, Isaac Disraeli, and Peel ; with Lords Holland, Sligo, Lansdowne, Cowper, Normanby, Nugent, and Dudley, the Duke of Devonshire, and the Earl and Countess of Jersey. At Hobhouse’s suggestion the work was undertaken by Thorwaldsen, for so small a sum as a thousand pounds. But Dean Ireland refused the Poet’s statue, as he had barred out the Poet’s body ; and it lay at the Custom House, unpacked, for many years. Dr. Ireland was succeeded in 1842 by Dr. Turton, afterwards Bishop of Ely ; Byron’s right to a place in Poets’ Corner was denied by Dr. Turton, as twice before by Dr. Ireland ; his denial was applauded by the then Bishop of London (Blomfield) in his place in the House of Lords ; and Hobhouse replied to his Lordship (1844) in a pamphlet, privately

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printed, but reproduced as an appendix to *Travels in Albania*, which is excellent reading still. It was to no purpose. The Abbey doors are closed on Byron yet ; and the Thorwaldsen, after nearly half a century of seclusion, was at last accepted by Master Whewell (largely at the instance of the Messrs. De la Pryme) for the Library of Byron's old college, whence it is not likely to be removed.

'A man,' says Byron, 'of learning, of talent, of steadiness, and of honour': a man, as we can see, of singular alertness of mind, energy of temperament, integrity of purpose, and strength of character and will: Hobhouse is honourably remembered, apart from the friendship which is his title to enduring fame, as an influential politician, and as a diligent, adroit, and faithful servant of the State. An original Radical and Reformer, he began, being one of the Rota Club, by getting committed to Newgate for a breach of privilege ; went on to be elected (with Burdett) for Westminster, which he represented for thirteen years ; was Secretary for War, Chief Secretary for Ireland, Commissioner for Woods and Forests, and twice President of the Board of Control ; and in 1857 was raised to the peerage as Lord Broughton de Gyfford.

WILLIAM GIFFORD (1757-1826)—'the asp, Gifford,' as Mr. Swinburne calls him—began life as a shoemaker's apprentice ; had an extremely arduous and difficult youth ; raised himself to eminence and authority by sheer force of character and intelligence—both limited and in some sort vitiated, no doubt,

John Cam
Hobhouse.

William
Gifford.

ESSAYS

William Gifford. but both indomitable and real ; and, having edited *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98), was made Editor of the *Quarterly*, on its establishment in 1809. He did good service to literature in *The Baviad* (1794), *The Mæviad* (1795), *The Epistle to Peter Pindar* (1800)—(in the two first he utterly annihilated the silly set of poetasters known as the Della-Cruscans ; and in the second he checked the insolence of as bold and hard-hitting a ruffian as the journalism of the time could boast)—and, especially, in his editions of *Massinger* (1805), *Jonson* (1816), and *Ford* (1827), which contain much sound work, and set forth the results of wide reading and the operations of a clear, vigorous, clever, and less prejudiced than narrow mind. Also his *Juvenal* (1802) has a certain spiteful merit, but is not much read now. For his literary temper was atrocious ; his criticisms, whether aggressive or corrective, seem the effect of downright malignity ; in the long-run you are tempted to side with his victims. Byron, however, was always a ‘ fervent ’ of Pope ; to Byron Gifford represented the Pope tradition at its best ; for Gifford Byron entertained an immense (and very fatuous) respect (‘ I have always considered him,’ he writes to Murray a very little while before his death, ‘ as my literary father, and myself as his “ prodigal son ” ’) ; Byron was ever ready to submit himself to Gifford’s judgment ; and to Gifford Byron ‘ gave *carte blanche* to strike out or alter anything at his pleasure in *The Siege of Corinth* ’ as it was passing through the press. Monstrous though it seem to us now, in fact, this alliance between Leviathan and a blind-worm (so to speak) was genuine, and the

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sincerity of neither party to it can be impugned. In 1808 it was merely one-sided ; for Gifford scarce recked at all of Byron's existence, and Byron himself was only the poet of a lot of *juvenilia*. But it was already possible, by reason of Byron's simplicity and good faith ; and in a very few years it became a rather potent fact.

William
Gifford.

'BOB GREGSON, P. P.' (= 'Poet of Pugilism'), was born (1778) in Lancashire ; 'filled the situation of Captain of the Liverpool Wigan Packet for several years with credit and respect' ; fought his way to the Championship of his County ; came to London, and commenced pugilist ; was twice beaten by Gully (1783-1863) for the Championship, once in October 1807 and again in May 1808 ; was beaten for the Championship by Cribb (1781-1848) in February 1809 ; and, retiring from the Profession, was for some time landlord of the Castle Tavern, Holborn—'Bob's Chophouse,' it was called—a headquarters of the Fancy during the brightest years of the Ring. As he couldn't make the Castle pay (he was succeeded by the eminent Tom Belcher, who could) he left London for Dublin, where he set up first 'A School for teaching the Art of Self-defence,' and next was landlord of The Punch-House, Moore Street. He died in Liverpool in 1824. He was a boxer of tremendous energy, courage, and bottom (in his first fight with Gully as in his battle with Cribb, he had his men beaten to a standstill, so that it was feared that Gully would die, while Cribb fell down, and 'did not recover for some

Bob Greg-
son, P. P.

ESSAYS

Bob Greg-
son, P. P.

few minutes') ; a fine figure of a man (he stood six feet one, and is reported to have sat to Lawrence, and to have been lectured upon by Carlisle, Professor of Anatomy at the Royal Academy) ; a lover of tunes and verses, and no bad hand at a 'chaunt' ; withal, a person of manners and sentiment. See *Tom Cribb's Memorial to Congress* :—

My eyes ! how prettily Bob writes !

Talk of your *Camels*, *Hogs*, and *Crabs*,
And twenty more such Pidcock frights—

Bob's worth a hundred of these dabs, etc.

It is characteristic of the age that Ben Drury, probably a parson, and certainly an Eton Master, should be found pleading a bankrupt boxer's cause ; and it is characteristic of Byron, who was afterwards a member of the Pugilistic Club—one of the hundred-and-fifty Corinthians, that is, with whose countenance and inside whose ropes and stakes all decent mills were done,—who made, among others, the match between Dogherty and Tom Belcher, who saw (he says) all Cribb's fights, and who may very well have seen both of Gregson's with Gully, that he should be found willing, impecunious as he is, to come to a bankrupt boxer's aid. For these were the Golden Years of the Ring ; when Pugilism was to the people of England all, and more than all, that Cricket and Football are to the people of England now ; so that a trial between two famous artists—as Cribb and Molineaux, or Spring and Langan, or Painter and Oliver—would be fought in the presence of some twenty thousand men, the most of whom had ridden, or driven, or padded the hoof, a many miles to see, at the risk of broken heads and

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ravished pockets ; while £100,000 would change hands on the event. We have seen (*ante*, p. 247) how Mr. Jackson, the King of Milling, who did the most of any man that ever lived to make Pugilism respectable (as Jem Belcher made it artistic and heroic), kept, and deserved to keep, the best of company, and how two poets, Keats, the high-priest of beauty (and the most pugnacious of mortals), and 'Anacreon' Moore witnessed the great affair between Randall and Turner. This was in 1818, ten years after Ben Drury's appeal ; and in 1807, eleven years before it, here (according to the late Thomas Constable's *Archibald Constable and His Literary Correspondents*, Edinburgh, 1873) is how Alexander Gibson Hunter, 'Forfarshire laird and Edinburgh bookseller,' the Great Mogul's first partner, in company with 'the Bailie' (his father), fared forth on Fox Maule's coach, 'to see the great fight between Belcher and Cribb,' at what he calls 'Mosely Hurst near Hampton Court' (Moulsey was a favourite spot with Mr. Jackson and his lieges ; for at Bushey lived H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence, and His Highness loved the sport). 'Mosely Hurst,' says Hunter, 'is the most beautiful meadow I almost ever saw, hard and smooth as velvet, and of great extent' ; and although it had been bruited abroad that the ring would be pitched at Newmarket, which sent forth 'many a hundred on the wrong track,' yet had we 'fully 10,000, I suppose, present as it was, and many hundreds of carriages, horses, carts, *etc.*' Captain Barclay of Urie—(who had made the match for Cribb, and was presently to train him for the historic *reprise* with

Bob Greg-
son, P. P.

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Molineaux)—‘received us, and put us across the river in a boat’; and ‘among the gentlemen present were the Duke of Kent’—a familiar title, is it not?—‘Mr. Wyndham (*sic*), Lord Archibald Hamilton (a famous hand, I am told), Lord Kinnaird, Mr. T. Sheridan, *etc. etc.*,’ while ‘the honourable Barclay (*sic*) Craven was judge.’ In pushing to the ring-side, the Bailie got ‘made a *wild goose*’ (that is, his hat was knocked over his eyes, and when he put up his hands to save it, he wasn’t allowed to put them down again while a single pocket remained unvisited); and when at last we reached it, we found the circle of carts and carriages ‘so close and so broad, and such a crowd and squeeze of people, that I could neither force my way through nor get back,’ so ‘I crawled through below the carriages, at the immense hazard of death from carriage wheels, kicks of horses, *etc.*’ For the fight itself, enough that Cribb was a renowned ‘glutton’; that Jem Belcher, the man of genius who had reinspired and renewed the art, and who stands to Pugilism much as ‘the Doctor’ stands to Cricket, had lost an eye at rackets four years before, but was still capable of administering tremendous punishment; that it lasted some forty minutes; and that ‘the great science and power displayed by both parties made me consider this a much less cruel and more manly and entertaining amusement than I could have believed possible.’ Hunter, remember, was a Scot abroad; and in Scotland Pugilism never thrived. But in England Pugilism was a part of the nation’s life and a moving factor in the nation’s art and politics. When Moore had to

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appeal (in the Whig interest) to the general sentiment of the people, he cast his argument in the lingo of the Fancy, as in *Tom Cribb to Big Ben*—('Big Ben!' the *nom de guerre* of a famous bruiser, was a popular nickname for the Regent)—and *Tom Cribb's Memorial to Congress*. Hazlitt's account of the fight between Bill Neate and the terrific Hickman is among the classic pages of modern prose. Not by any means the worst of Keats's friend, John Hamilton Reynolds, are the verses he found at the ring-side, the Sonnet on Randall:—

Bob Greg-
son, P. P.

Good with both hands, and only ten stone four:—

and the rest. In a famous speech Windham compared the spirit of those who watched the fight between Maddox and Richmond to that of the combatants at Talavera and Vimeira. In 1826 the Duke himself is found subscribing £30 towards a purse to be fought for under his eye, by Young Dutch Sam and another, on the course at Ascot. When Eldon, as he passed into the House for a big debate on Catholic Emancipation, stopped to shake hands with Plunkett (1828), 'That reminds me,' quoth Lyttelton to the Irishman, 'of Gregson and Gully shaking hands before they *set-to*.' It is told of Grey, the Foreign Secretary in 'the Talents,' that he sent an express, 'upon public service,' to Windham (Secretary for War) with the result of the second mill between these same two heroes. And it is told of Edmund Kean that he found the supreme moment of his Richard, when, in Hazlitt's phrase, 'he fought like one drunk with wounds,' in the last effort of a beaten boxer. A dreadful age,

ESSAYS

Bob Greg-son, P. P. no doubt : for all its solid foundations, of faith and dogma in the Church and of virtue and solvency in the State, a fierce, drunken, gambling, 'keeping,' adulterous, high-living, hard-drinking, hard-hitting, brutal age. But it was Byron's ; and *Don Juan* and *The Giaour* are as naturally its outcomes as *Absalom and Achitophel* is an expression of the Restoration, and *In Memoriam* a product of Victorian England.

Lord Carlisle.

FREDERICK HOWARD (1748-1825), Fifth Earl of Carlisle, one of the Commissioners to America, 1778 ; Viceroy of Ireland, 1780 ; thanked by the House for 'the wisdom and purity of his administration,' 1782 ; Author of *Tragedies and Poems* (1801), *Thoughts on the Present Condition of the Stage* (1808), and so forth. A son of Isabella Byron, sister to the Wicked (Fifth) Lord, the Court of Chancery had made him Byron's guardian, and to him Byron dedicated *Hours of Idleness*. The compliment was coldly—not to say ungraciously—received. But Byron, whether he resented it or not, had no mind to quarrel, and in *English Bards* began by 'Crowning a new Roscommon in Carlisle.' Before the copy went to press, however, he had applied to Lord Carlisle for certain information, and had been snubbed. Also, being 'under the impression that it was customary for a young peer, on first taking his seat, to have some friend to introduce him, he wrote to remind Lord Carlisle that he should be of age at the beginning of the session, and received a mere formal, and, as it appeared to him,

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cold reply, acquainting him with the technical work of procedure on such occasions' (MOORE). As was inevitable, the couplet came out, and, in the end, the attack was delivered as we know it now:—

No more will cheer with renovating smile
The paralytic puling of Carlisle.

That Byron lived to regret his bitterness is shown by a letter to Rogers (1814) in which he asks if there is 'any chance of a possibility of making it up with Carlisle,' and by the 'young, gallant Howard' stanza in the Third *Harold* (xxix-xxxiii). With regard to the origin of the constraint between Byron and Carlisle, Murray's Editor quotes ('from two unpublished letters') these extracts:—

'Nov. 11, 1804. You mistake me if you think I dislike Lord Carlisle. I respect him, and might like him did I know him better. For him *my mother has an antipathy*—why, I know not. I am afraid he could be but of little use to me; but I dare say he would assist me if he could; so I take the will for the deed, and am obliged to him, exactly in the same manner as if he succeeded in his efforts.'—'Nov. 21, 1804. To Lord Carlisle make my warmest acknowledgments. I feel more gratitude than I can well express. I am truly obliged to him for his endeavours, and am perfectly satisfied with your explanation of his reserve, though I was hitherto afraid it might proceed from personal dislike. For the future, I shall consider him as more my friend than I have hitherto been *taught* to think.'

Yet five years afterwards the ward was so little acquainted with his guardian as not to know of the 'nervous disorder,' which afflicted Lord Carlisle, and to which—to Byron's indignation—it was supposed that 'paralytic puling' was a direct and open reference.

ESSAYS

Lord
Falkland.

CHARLES JOHN, Eighth Viscount Falkland (1768-1809), Captain, R.N., was mortally wounded in a duel by a Mr. Powell, and died the same day. The quarrel appears to have taken place in the Argyle Institution (or some such place), which was part hell and part assembly rooms. Hence the lines in *English Bards* :—

The jovial caster's set, and seven's the nick,
Or—done !—a thousand on the coming trick !
If, mad with loss, existence 'gins to tire,
And all your hope or wish is to expire,
Here's Powell's pistol ready for your life,
And, kinder still, two Pagets for your wife.

In a note to this passage Byron writes :—‘ I knew the late Lord Falkland well. On Sunday night I beheld him presiding at his own table, in all the honest pride of hospitality ; on Wednesday morning, at three o'clock, I saw stretched before me all that remained of courage, feeling, and a host of passions. He was a gallant and successful officer : his faults were the faults of a sailor [those of dissipation]—as such, Britons will forgive them. He died like a brave man in a better cause ; for had he fallen in like manner on the deck of the frigate to which he was just appointed, his last moments would have been held up by his countrymen as an example to succeeding heroes.’ In a letter to Hanson (8th February 1809), Byron, after remarking that he is ‘ dunned from noon till twilight,’ and that he must have money or ‘ quit the country,’ adds this :—‘ If I do not get my seat immediately, I shall sail with Lord Falkland in the *Désirée* frigate for Sicily.’ Yet, soon after the duel, says Moore, he

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'reminded the unfortunate widow that he was to be godfather to her infant ; the child was christened Byron-Charles-Ferdinand-Plantagenet Cary, and after the ceremony the poet inserted a five hundred pound note in a breakfast cup . . . not discovered till he had left the house.'

Lord
Falkland.

WILLIAM BECKFORD (1759-1844) of *Vathek* (1787), that masterpiece of wit, imagination, and narrative, written at twenty-two, and in a single sitting of 'three days and two nights,' during which time 'I never took off my clothes,' so that 'the severe application made me very ill.' At the time of Byron's writing he was still the Beckford of Font-hill and its Tower, which he did not sell till 1822. But the Beckford of Cintra (1794-96) was already so completely of the past, that Byron, not long after this very Letter, could address him in these terms :—

William
Beckford.

Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan,
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow :
But now, as if a thing unblest by Man,
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou !
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide :
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are the pleasaunces on earth supplied ;
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide !

In 1822 he became the Beckford of Bath, where he built him another Tower, and shut himself up with his books, his pictures and statues, his moods and humours and caprices ; and then in 1834 he published his third book, the excellent series of letters

ESSAYS

William
Beckford.

entitled *Italy: with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*. In that year, too, he reprinted his *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters*, written at seventeen, and still amusing reading of a kind ; and in 1835 he published his *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alobaça and Batalha*. This is all his literary baggage ; and from the *Recollections* onward till his death he was a resolute, invisible recluse. But at eleven he had succeeded to the worth of a million of money ; and he had sat in Parliament (once for Eccles and once for Hindon), known the greatest grief that can befall a man, lived as he would with none to say him nay, produced such a master-story as must live as long as the French in which it was written and the English into which it was translated, and thereby approved himself the best Voltairean bred in England before the coming of Benjamin Disraeli. As to Byron's description of him, this from Moore (*Diary* : 18th October 1818) may serve to eke it out :—' Beckford wishes me to go to Fonthill with R[ogers] ; anxious that I should look over his *Travels* . . . and prepare them for the press. Rogers supposes he would give me something magnificent for it,—a thousand pounds, perhaps. But if he were to give me a hundred times that sum, I would not have my name coupled with his. To be Beckford's *sub*, not very desirable.'

Ali Pasha. ALI PASHA (1741-1822), called 'the Lion,' born at Tepeleni, Albania. The son of a plundered father and a very tigress of a mother, he began his

BYRON'S WORLD

career ('tis said) by finding a treasure, with which Ali Pasha. he raised an army, and took merciless and summary vengeance on the thieving Pasha who had spoiled his house. Then, having slain his brother, and shut up his mother for the crime, he took arms for the Porte against the Vizier of Scutari, and, being rewarded for his services with a sort of lieutenantancy of police, went hand and glove with the very brigands he was commissioned to keep in check. Recalled in disfavour, he bribed himself free again; fought for the Porte against Austria and Russia (1787); was given the Thessalian Pashalik of Trikala; and laying hands on Yanina, part forged, part bribed, part threatened himself into the Pashalik thereof. He intrigued (1796 and 1807) with Napoleon; he took Prevyza from the French (1797); he subdued and massacred the Suliotes; he sought alliance with the English, got hold of Parga, and made himself so living a terror to the Sultan, that his deposition was ordained, and he was at last forced back upon, and shut up in, Yanina. In the end, he yielded on the strength of an oath that his life would not be taken nor his treasures forfeited, and received the bowstring there and then. His head, being sent to Constantinople, and spiked outside the seraglio, was cheapened by a native merchant as a good enough speculation for the London show-market (Ali was well known in England, where everybody read the *Harold*); but the scheme 'was defeated by the piety of an old servant of the Pasha,' who bribed the executioner with a higher price, and bestowed decent sepulture on the relic. He was at once a bloody tyrant, an

ESSAYS

Ali Pasha. admirable soldier, and a vigorous and enlightened ruler. 'A short man,' says Hobhouse, 'about five feet five inches in height, possessing a very pleasing face, fair and round, with blue quick eyes, and not at all settled into Turkish gravity' (*Travels*, etc.). And Byron, after calling him a 'man of war and woes,' continues thus (Second *Harold*, lxii.):—

Yet in his lineaments ye cannot trace,
While gentleness her milder radiance throws
Along that aged venerable face,
The deeds that lurk beneath, and stain him with
disgrace.

Robert
Adair.

ROBERT (afterwards SIR ROBERT) ADAIR (1763-1855), Ambassador at Vienna (1806), Constantinople (1808-11), Brussels (1831-5), and Berlin. The son of Sergeant-Surgeon Adair and Lady Caroline Keppel, he went to Westminster School and thence to Göttingen, where he fell in love with his tutor's daughter, and thus (being an ancient Whig) suggested to George Canning the character of Rogero ('Adair was ever an enthusiastic admirer of the fair sex,' Lord Albemarle says, and perhaps the name sets forth a synonym too liberal for discussion here), and a certain classic in *The Rovers*, or *The Double Arrangement*:—

Whene'er with haggard eyes I view
This dungeon that I'm rotting in,
I think on those companions true
Who studied with me at the U-
-niversity of Göttingen
-niversity of Göttingen.

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This was in the Thirtieth *Anti-Jacobin* (June 1798) ; but it was by no means Adair's first appearance in that print. In 1796 he had published *Part of a Letter from Robert Adair, Esq., to the Right Hon. C. J. Low: Occasioned by Mr. Burke's Mention of Lord Keppel in a Recent Publication.* Hence the description in the Eleventh Number :—

Robert
Adair.

' Or is it he,—the youth, whose daring soul
With *half a mission* sought the Frozen Pole,
And then, returning from the unfinished work,
Wrote *half a letter*—to demolish Burke ?
Studied Burke's manner,—aped his forms of speech ;
Though when he strives his metaphors to reach,
One luckless slip the meaning overstrains,
And loads the blunderbuss with Bedford's brains ' :—

with this note on the last line :—' This line is wholly unintelligible without a note. And we are afraid the note will be wholly incredible, unless the reader can fortunately procure the book to which it refers. In the *Part of a Letter*, which was published by Mr. Robt. Adair, in answer to Mr. Burke's *Letter to the D. of B.*, nothing is so remarkable as the studious imitation of Mr. Burke's style. His vehemence, and his passion, and his irony, his wild imagery, his far-sought illustrations, his rolling and lengthened periods, and the short, quick, pointed sentences in which he often condenses as much wisdom and wit as others would expand through pages, or through volumes,—all these are carefully kept in view by his opponent, though not always very artificially copied or applied. But imitators are liable to be led strangely astray ; and never was there an instance of a more complete mistake of a

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Robert Adair. plain meaning, than that which this line is intended to illustrate—a mistake no less than that of a *coffin* for a *corpse*. This is hard to believe or to comprehend—but you shall hear. Mr. Burke, in one of his publications, had talked of the French “*unplumbing* the dead in order to destroy the living,”—by which he intended, without doubt, not metaphorically, but literally, “*stripping the dead of their LEADEN COFFINS, and then making them (not the DEAD but the COFFINS) into bullets.*” A circumstance perfectly notorious at the time the book was written. But this does not satisfy our author. He determines to retort Mr. Burke’s own words upon him ; and unfortunately “reaching at a metaphor,” where Mr. Burke only intended a fact, he falls into the little mistake above mentioned, and by a stroke of his pen transmutes the illustrious Head of the house of Russell into a metal, to which it is not for us to say how near or how remote his affinity may possible have been. He writes thus—“*If Mr. Burke had been content with ‘unplumbing’ a dead Russell, and hewing HIM (observe—not the coffin, but HIM—the old dead Russell himself) into grape and canister, to sweep down the whole generation of his descendants,*” etc. etc. The thing is scarcely credible ; but IT IS SO ! We write with the book open before us.’

The ‘half a mission’ to ‘the Frozen Pole’ is a gibe at a journey to St. Petersburg (1791), which Adair was supposed to have made at Fox’s instance, with a view to concerting measures with the Empress and her Ministers to the prejudice of Pitt. Hence, too, the parody of *Non Usitata Nec Tenui*

BYRON'S WORLD

Penna, called *A Bit of an Ode to Mr. Fox*, which Robert Adair, appeared in the Twelfth *Anti-Jacobin* :—

I mount, I mount into the sky,
Sweet bird, to *Petersburg* I'll fly,
Or, if you bid, to *Paris*.
Fresh missions of the *Fox* and *Goose*
Successful Treaties may produce,
Though *PITT* in all miscarries.

‘This idle story,’ writes Adair, in an autograph statement prefixed to the *Life of Wilberforce* (London, 1838), and quoted by Mr. Charles Edmunds in his Edition (London, 1890) of the Poetry of *The Anti-Jacobin*—‘This idle story is here accredited by Mr. Wilberforce, and inserted by his sons, without due examination. It was grounded on a journey I made to Vienna and St. Petersburg in 1791. Dr. Prettyman [*sic*], Bishop of Winchester, in a work entitled *The Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt*, published by him in 1823, brought forward the fact of my having gone upon this journey as a criminal charge against Mr. Fox, who, as he pretends, sent me upon it with the intent of counteracting some negotiations then carrying on between Great Britain and Russia at St. Petersburg. I answered his accusation, I trust, successfully, in two letters published by Longman & Co. [*Two Letters from Mr. Adair to the Bp. of Winchester, in answer to the charge of a High Treasonable Misdemeanour brought by his Lordship against Mr. Fox and himself in his Life of the Rt. Hon. W. Pitt*, 8vo, 1821], and explained the circumstances which induced me in my travels in 1791 to visit the two capitals above mentioned.—

ESSAYS

Robert
Adair.

ROBERT ADAIR, 1838.' The charge was first bruited by Edmund Burke, says Mr. Edmunds, in his *Letter on the Conduct of the Minority*, and was broached anew, as late as 1854, by Lord Malmesbury, in a speech to the Lords: when it was solemnly denied by Lord Campbell.

It remains to add of Adair that he wrote the 'Margaret Nicholson' and the 'Song of Scrutina' in *The Rolliad*, an account of his *Mission to the Court of Vienna* (1844) and *Negotiations for the Peace of the Dardanelles* (1845); married a daughter of the Marquis d'Hazincourt; and died in Chesterfield Street only eight years short of a hundred old.

Scrope
Davies.

SCROPE BERDMORE DAVIES, a Cambridge friend, went to Eton with Hodgson and Drury and the rest, and was afterwards, according to custom, a Fellow of King's. 'One of the cleverest men I ever knew, in conversation, was Scrope Berdmores Davies. Hobhouse is also very good in that line, though it is of less consequence to a man who has other ways of showing his talents than in company. Scrope was always ready, and often witty—Hobhouse as witty but not so ready, being more diffident.'—*MS. Journal of Lord Byron* (MOORE). In the August of 1811 Byron made a will, in which he named Davies and Hobhouse his executors: the two to divide 'my library and furniture of every description.' On the 28th of the same month he executed a codicil, by which he revoked the bequest of his 'household goods and furniture, library,

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pictures, sabres, watches, plate, linen, trinkets, and other personal estate (except money and securities) situate within the walls of the mansion-house and premises at his decease—and bequeathed the same (except his wine and spirituous liquors) to his friends, the said J. C. Hobhouse, S. B. Davies, and Francis Hodgson, their executors, etc., to be equally divided between them for their own use ;—and he bequeathed his wine and spirituous liquors, which should be in the cellars and premises at Newstead, unto his friend, the said J. Becher, for his own use, and requested the said J. C. Hobhouse, S. B. Davies, F. Hodgson, and J. Becher, respectively, to accept the bequest therein contained to them respectively, as a token of his friendship.’ A quaint and pleasing picture of Davies is painted (under date of March 28, 1814) in Byron’s *MS. Journal* (MOORE):— ‘Yesterday, dined tête-à-tête at the Cocoa, with Scrope Davies—sat from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret, neither of which wines ever affect me. Offered to take Scrope home in my carriage ; but he was tipsy and pious, and I was obliged to leave him on his knees praying to I know not what purpose or pagod. No headache, nor sickness. . . . I have heard nothing more from Scrope. Yesterday paid him four thousand eight hundred pounds, a debt of some standing, and which I wished to have paid before.’ In 1814 Davies is one of the Drury Lane Committee, presents a share to Edmund Kean, and appears as a subscriber to the Testimonial Cup. And in 1816 he, with Hobhouse, visits Byron at Diodati. After which you find him ‘giving very

Scrope
Davies.

ESSAYS

Scrope
Davies.

good accounts of his (Byron's) health and spirits' to Augusta, 'though he confesses he *found* him gloomy' (Mrs. Leigh to Hodgson, 29th October 1816); and about the same time a generous inscription gives him *Parisina*.

According to Gronow (*Reminiscences*, Third Series), Davies, whom he describes as 'the life and soul of those who relished learning and genius and wit,' was a desperate gambler, and for some time played with equal daring and success. As a rule, he preferred the bank before the individual; but on one occasion, having departed from his custom, he fairly beggared his antagonist, and reduced him to despair, when, learning that nothing was left him in the world, he restored his winnings on the spot, on the other man's promise that he would play no more. After a while, however, 'fortune deserted her old favourite,' and, 'unable to mingle any longer with the rich, the giddy, and the gay,' he retired to Paris, where he had 'few intimates,' received those whom he wished to see on a bench in the Tuileries Gardens, and occupied himself with the composition of certain 'notes on the men of his time'—(he talked of them to Murray)—the MS. of which has disappeared. 'His manners and appearance,' says this writer, 'were of the true Brummell type': that is, 'there was nothing showy in his exterior.' A pun of his has got itself embalmed in the true Byron:—

'When Brummell was obliged to retire to France, he knew no French, and having obtained a grammar for the purpose of study, our friend Scrope Davies was asked what progress Brummell had made in French; he responded, "that

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Brummell had been stopped, like Buonaparte in Russia, Scrope by the *elements*." I have put this pun into *Beppo*, etc.'—Davies. BYRON, *Diary*, 1821:—

and a neat enough distich (on an amateur actor) is quoted in J. T. Hodgson's *Memoir*:—

Not to be hissed delights the dunce,
But who can hiss and groan at once?

In the same book you get the last of him, in a letter to Hodgson from Dr. Hawtrey:—'I am sure you will be sorry to hear that our old friend Scrope Davies was found dead in his bed at Paris'—(2 Rue Miroménil)—'a few days since' (24th May 1852). 'He was a most agreeable and kind-hearted person, and I shall not soon forget the pleasant hours I have passed with him. He seemed quite broken down when I had a glimpse of him a few months since at Eton. I hardly knew him again, and should not have done so had he not mentioned his name.'

HOWE PETER BROWNE (1788-1845), Second Mar-
quess of Sligo, was, like most of the men of his age,
a patron of Pugilism, and in 1813, on the occasion
of Tom Belcher's second fight with Dogherty, I
find him giving five guineas at the ring-side towards
a purse for the twice-beaten Irishman. Withal, he
was something of an antiquary, and the vases,
lachrymatories, and gold ornaments which he found
in the tombs of Hellas were taken by him to West-
port House, Westport, where they now are. To
understand what follows, one must know that at
Gibraltar he had joined Lady Hester Stanhope

Marquess of
Sligo.

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Marquess of Sligo. (1776-1829), then starting on that uncommon adventure which was to stamp her one of the most notable women of her time. At Gibraltar she had arrived with her brother, Captain Stanhope ; but at Gibraltar Stanhope was ordered to rejoin his regiment, and either she must have turned back, or she must have come on alone, had not Michael Bruce—the Bruce who was to contrive the escape of Lavalette with Hutchinson and Sir Robert Wilson (1815)—undertaken to escort her on the perilous journey which she had resolved to make through European Turkey. (*Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*. . . . ‘Narrated By Her Physician,’ London, 1846, i. 4.) At the Piræus, adds the Physician, ‘just as we were passing the mole-head, we saw a man jump from it into the sea, whom Lord Sligo recognised to be Lord Byron himself, and, hailing him, bade him hasten to dress and to come and join us.’ The sequel may be told in Moore’s own words:—‘It was in the course, I believe, of their first interview, at his (Lord Sligo’s) table, that Lady Hester, with that lively eloquence for which she is so remarkable, took the poet briskly to task for the depreciating opinion, which, as she understood, he entertained of all female intellect. Being but little inclined, were he even able, to sustain such a heresy, against one who was in her own person such an irresistible refutation of it, Lord Byron had no other refuge from the fair orator’s arguments than in assent and silence ; and this well-bred deference being, in a sensible woman’s eyes, equivalent to concession, they became, from thenceforward, most cordial friends. In recalling some recollec-

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tions of this period in his *Memoranda*, after relating the circumstance of his being caught bathing by an English party at Sunium, he added, "This was the beginning of the most delightful acquaintance which I formed in Greece." He then went on to assure Mr. Bruce, if ever those pages should meet his eyes, that the days they had passed together at Athens were remembered by him with pleasure.' Marquess of Sligo.

Further, Lord Sligo told Moore several anecdotes of Byron, which may here be reproduced. The first was recalled as a proof of the poet's consciousness of his beauty:—"He was a good deal weakened and thinned by his illness at Patras, and, on his return to Athens, standing one day before a looking-glass, he said to Lord Sligo—"How pale I look!—I should like, I think, to die of a consumption."—"Why of a consumption?" asked his friend. "Because then (he answered) the women would all say, 'See that poor Byron—how interesting he looks in dying!'" The next is an anticipation of *The Deformed Transformed*:—"He spoke often of his mother . . . and with a feeling that seemed little short of aversion. "Some time or other," he said, "I will tell you *why* I feel thus towards her."—A few days after, when they were bathing together in the Gulf of Lepanto, he referred to this promise, and, pointing to his naked leg and foot, exclaimed—"Look there!—it is to her false delicacy at my birth I owe that deformity; and yet as long as I can remember, she has never ceased to taunt and reproach me with it. Even a few days before we parted, for the last time, on my leaving England, she, in one of her fits of passion,

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Marquess of Sligo. uttered an imprecation upon me, praying that I might prove as ill formed in mind as I am in body! ” His look and manner, in relating this frightful circumstance, can be conceived only by those who have ever seen him in a similar state of excitement.’ ‘The little value,’ Moore goes on to say, ‘he had for those relics of ancient art, in pursuit of which he saw all his classic fellow-travellers so ardent, was, like everything he ever thought or felt, unreservedly avowed by him. Lord Sligo having it in contemplation to expend some money in digging for antiquities, Lord Byron, in offering to act as his agent . . . said—“ You may safely trust *me*—I am no dilettante. Your connoisseurs are all thieves ; but I care too little for these things ever to steal them.” ’ A profession of indifference which is fully confirmed by Galt.

Joseph
Blackett.

JOSEPH BLACKETT (1786-1810), ‘Cobler Joe,’ as Byron somewhere calls him, came eleventh in the family of twelve children born to a day labourer in the service of Sir John Lawson, at Tunstill, Yorks. In 1797 he went to London as apprentice to his brother (a shoemaker) ; married at eighteen ; was a widower (with child) at twenty-one ; was helped by a printer called Marchant, who set up his verses gratis, and introduced him to Pratt ; published a book of *Specimens* (with Pratt to the front as editor and bear-leader) at twenty-three (1809) ; and died in the August of the next year at Seaham, in Northumberland, where, as the county historian puts it of this ‘unfortunate child of genius,’ his

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'last days were soothed by the generous attention of the family of Milbanke.'—MOORE. See, too, ^{Joseph Blackett.}
English Bards :—

When some brisk youth, the tenant of a stall,
Employs a pen less pointed than his awl,
Leaves his snug shop, forsakes his store of shoes,
St. Crispin quits, and cobbles for the Muse,
Heavens ! how the vulgar stare ! how crowds applaud !
How ladies read, and literati laud :—

with Byron's Note (1816) :—' This was meant for poor Blackett, who was then patronised by A. J. B. ; but *that* I did not know, or this would not have been written, at least I think not.' In a letter to Dallas, Byron writes of this same Blackett :—' Who would think that anybody would be such a blockhead as to sin against an express proverb :—*Ne sutor ultra crepidam* ?

But spare him, ye Critics, his follies are past,
For the Cobbler is come, as he ought, to his *last*.

Which two lines, with a scratch under *last* to show where the joke lies, I beg that you will prevail on Miss Milbanke to have inserted on the tomb of her departed Blackett.'

AUGUSTA BYRON—Mrs. Shelley's 'Dowdy-Goody' ^{Augusta Leigh.}
—seems to have been born in 1784—(the year of her mother's death ; though Mr. Paget, in his admirable account of 'the Beecher-Stowe fiasco (*Blackwood*, January 1870 : *Paradoxes and Puzzles*, London and Edinburgh, 1874), thinks that she may have been born as early as 1780)—

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Augusta
Leigh.

and lived with her father at Chantilly, and with her father and stepmother at Chantilly and in Holles Street till the year of Byron's birth, when her grandmother, the once beautiful Dutch girl, now the Dowager-Countess of Holderness, took charge of her. This lady and the ingenuous Mrs. John Byron were not friends: so that it was not until after the Dowager-Countess's death that the brother and sister began to see and know each other. By that time Byron was a boy of fourteen; but to Augusta he was ever the 'Baby Byron' she had left in Holles Street. Henceforth, too, she was his best and staunchest friend, the one influence in his life that made steadily for good. 'Augusta,' he said at Genoa, 'knew all my weaknesses, yet had love enough to bear with them; in fact, she 'but loved and pitied me the more because I was erring.' She never shrank from telling him the truth, nor from excepting to such of his acts and words as seemed to her to put him in the wrong; he left to her and her children whatever remained of his estate, after the performance of the trusts of his marriage settlement—'in consequence of my dear wife Lady Byron and whatever children I may have being otherwise amply provided for'; he cherished for her an unwavering regard, which found utterance in more than one immortal song. After the Marriage, Mrs. Leigh (she had been the wife of Colonel Leigh of the Tenth Huzzars since 1807) was received into high favour by her sister-in-law, was chosen to be her companion before and after her confinement, and became (in fact) the 'Goose' to Lady Byron's 'Pippin' and to Byron's 'Duck.'

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She did her utmost for both parties at the time of the Separation. 'To me,' said Byron to Lady Blessington, 'she was, in the hour of need, a tower of strength.' Indeed, 'her affection was my last rallying-point, and is now the only bright spot that the horizon of England offers to my view.' Still, when Byron went into Exile (1816), she remained on terms of the most affectionate intimacy with his wife, till the end (it would seem) of 1829, when Lady Byron's insistence in appointing to the vacant trusteeship of Byron's estate no less a person than the Stephen Lushington of the Separation—(who could scarce be expected to prove a *persona grata* to Byron's sister)—led to a series of protests (Morrison Collection) from Mrs. Leigh, which the recipient either could not, or was anxious not, to brook. Thereafter, Byron's only child, the name-child, Augusta Ada, remained an entire stranger to her aunt; and the ill-matched sisters met no more till 1851—the year of Mrs. Leigh's death. It had been conveyed to her (it would seem) that Lady Byron had complained, and loudly, that but for Augusta's influence, Byron and she might have been reconciled; and this induced Mrs. Leigh to ask a meeting. Writing from Brighton (18th February 1851), 'I propose,' says Lady Byron, 'to meet you at the nearest convenient Hotel on this railway'; to 'hear *in Private* whatever you might have to say to me'; but 'should I, after hearing it, wish to make any observations, you must permit me to do so in the presence of a friend, who will accompany me.' The meeting—which 'cannot but be one of suffering to me,' but . . . 'I think

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Augusta
Leigh

it right to make it')—took place under these conditions (the 'friend' was Frederick Robertson of Brighton) at the White Hart, Reigate. Mrs. Leigh's communication was simply to the effect that such influence as she had had with her brother had ever been used to the advantage of his wife. 'Is that all?' said the other lady, who seems to have expected nothing less than a peculiar version of the story of Laon and Cythna. And, in writing to Mrs. Leigh (Brighton, April 12, 1851), after remarking that she (Lady B.) has 'done all in her power' to 'contribute to your peace of mind,' she 'remains under the afflicting persuasion that it is not to be attained by such means as you have taken.' The matter appears to end, so far as the world is concerned, with Mrs. Leigh's reply to this curious expression of self-righteousness:—

St. J. Palace, April 26, 1851.

I feel sure that you would not willingly be unjust, and therefore after much perplexing and deep consideration I have determined again to address you. My great wish for an interview with you arose partly from a secret desire to see you once more in this world, and still more to have the means of convincing you that accusations which I had reason to believe had been brought against me to you were unfounded, and at this, if only from the recollection of the affection that once subsisted between us, you cannot be surprised—I had not and never implied that I had anything to reveal to you, with which *you* were not previously acquainted, on any other subject—nor can I at all express to you the regret I have felt ever since those words escaped you, showing that you imagined I had 'encouraged a bitterness of feeling in Lord Byron towards you.' I now as solemnly declare to you as if I were on my oath or on my death-bed that I never did so in any one instance, but that I *invariably* did the con-

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trary—I have letters from him, and of my own to him (returned to me after his death) which would bear out this assertion, and I am ready at this, or any other moment, to make the most solemn asseveration of this, in any way that you can devise. I would willingly see your Friend Mr. Robertson, and afford him every proof of my veracity in my power. It was clear that he thought that I was keeping back communications that ought to be made to you, and as your confidential friend, it would be comfort to me to talk openly with him on such points as might tend to convince you of the truth of what I now say—and without which the remainder of my life will be still more unhappy than the miseries, of various kinds, which surround me must inevitably make me. Augusta Leigh.

She died at the end of this same year ; but Lady Byron, whether or not she had, as Paget insists, and it is generally believed, she had, talked Laon-and-Cythna under seal to Lushington, lived to talk and think it ten years longer.

JOHN MURRAY (1778-1843) was the son of John M'Murray (John I. 1745-1793), who threw up a commission in the Marines to turn bookseller at 32 Fleet Street, where, under the style and title of John Murray, he succeeded Paul Sandby. John Murray. John II. was but fifteen when his father died ; but he had uncommon energy and intelligence ; he made some fortunate ventures ; and by the time he was thirty or so he had planned and launched *The Quarterly Review*, with Gifford as editor, and Scott and Heber, Canning and George Ellis, for contributors. It was so instant a success that it was everywhere accepted as the official Tory organ, and the shop in Fleet Street—(it was not till 1812 that John II. took

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John
Murray. over Miller's place in Albemarle Street, and became the 'Emperor of the West')—was soon a veritable literary centre. Murray was Publisher to the Admiralty and the Board of Longitude ; but there is no department of letters in which he did not make and leave his mark. Among his authors were Henry Hallam, Lockhart (the *Scott* and the *Burns*), Campbell (*Specimens of the British Poets*), Richard Ford, 'Aristophanes' Mitchell, Plumer Ward, Crabbe, Lord Mahon, Prior (*Life of Goldsmith*), Sir John Barrow, Sir John Malcolm, Heber, Southey, Lord Rosse, Sir Humphrey Davy, Sir George Back, Greig, Sir George Head, Walter Scott, Morier (*Hajji Baba*), Hope (*Anastasius*), Washington Irving, Napier, Mme. de Staël, Wellington, Lady Caroline Lamb, Croker (*Boswell's Johnson*), George Borrow, Sir Edward Parry, Sir Alexander Burness, 'Monk' Lewis, Sir John Franklin, Malthus (*Essay on the Principle of Population*), Faraday, Babbage, Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Trollope, Carême (*The Art of French Cookery*), 'Nimrod,' Benjamin Disraeli (*Contarini Fleming* and *Gallomania*), and Mr. W. E. Gladstone (*The State in its Relation with the Church*)—to name but these. 'Tis a brilliant gathering ; but its *raisons d'être* are conspicuous. 'I believe'—thus John II. to Napier, to whom he had offered £500 for the first volume of the *Peninsular War*—'I believe that you will not find it is in my character to make any ungenerous offer for a valuable work' ; and he did himself the barest justice in the assumption. He gave Crabbe £3000 for a set of copyrights, whose interest was on the wane, and

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which the Longmans had refused to reconsider—^{John Murray.} and lost £1500 or so by the bargain. Washington Irving's *Columbus* and *Granada* cost him nearly £8800, which represented a deficit of £2250. To Moore, for the *Life* of Byron, he paid some £4800 in cash ; and in 1831 he stood to lose £300 on the first issue, 'even if the whole were sold.' But if he lost with one hand, he gained with the other. By 1838 Mrs. Rundell's *Art of Cookery* :—

Along thy shelves in order shine
The works thou deemest most divine,
The Art of Cookery, and mine,
My Murray :—

an early venture of his, had gone through sixty editions ; the circulation of the *Quarterly* ranged between nine and twelve thousand copies ; his interest in Byron alone must have been literally golden. For he was sagacious as well as daring. The business (so he held) of 'a publishing book-seller' lay in his brains—not in his shop ; and if he endured a loss of £26,000 in the matter of *The Representative*—(the ill-starred daily print which was the first in time and the worst in fortune of Benjamin Disraeli's many enterprises)—he had the rectitude and the good sense to retire from business with Constable and the Ballantynes ; so that when the crash came, he was able, not only to meet it with composure, but also, to stand to the rescue of some fellow-traders who must have gone under but for his hand. His authors, too,—and we have seen what manner of men they were—were his personal friends. He had the gift of wearing, as well as the trick of winning. And he passed the greater part

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John
Murray.

of a long, laborious, honourable life on equal terms and in constant association with the best of his time.

It was in 1811, while John II. was still in Fleet Street, that Dallas took him the MS. of the First and Second *Harold*; and this was the beginning of a connexion which, though it was interrupted by his refusal to publish *Don Juan* from the Sixth Canto onwards, was in the end resumed, and was throughout an advantage and a pleasure to both the parties. Poet and publisher were soon on the best possible terms. As his letters show, to nobody did Byron write with a finer felicity or a more abounding spirit than he wrote to Murray; while as for Murray, his regard for Byron was confessed not merely in big prices—which he could afford to pay, and which were simply Byron's due—but in a hundred little friendly offices, in a constant care for Byron's interest and Byron's fame, and in a series of letters (for which see Dr. Smiles's *Memoir, passim*), which show that the writer was never so happy as in seeking to make his correspondent happy by the transmission of good news, or a good book, or good words from an admirer or a friend. For the business relations between the two, enough to say that, roughly speaking, Murray produced everything that Byron wrote, with the exception of *English Bards*, the *Vision*, the *Hours*, the *Age of Bronze*, and the last cantos (eleven) of *Don Juan* (all which he bought of the Executors at a cost of £3885); that, besides what he gave Dallas for the First and Second *Harold* and *The Giaour* (£1125 in all), he paid to Byron nearly £15,000 in hard cash; that he purchased the MS. *Memoir* of Moore for £2100, and had decided to

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destroy it, and to be at a loss of the purchase-money, ^{John Murray.} when the matter was taken out of his hands ; that in answer to Leigh Hunt's attack on Byron's memory he commissioned Moore to prepare the *Life and Letters* (1830), himself contributing a good half of the matter, agreed to pay him four thousand guineas for the work, and in the long-run paid him £600 more ; and that in 1837 he produced the annotated edition of the *Poems* which, in one or other of its forms, has been hitherto the sole complete Byron to be had. Murray, in fact, was Byron's publisher, even as Byron was Murray's poet ; and to disassociate their several names and fames would, now or ever, be impossible.

THOMAS MOORE (1779-1852) was the son of a ^{Thomas Moore.} Dublin (Catholic) Grocer ; was educated at Sheridan's old school—(Mr. Whyte's : ' I was long his favourite *show-scholar* ')—and at Trinity College, Dublin—'after the memorable act of 1793, was one of the first of the young Helots of the land, who hastened to avail themselves of the privilege of being educated at their country's university' ; at fourteen, or less, was writing for the *Anthologia*, a local magazine, in which he read *The Pleasures of Memory* ; at fifteen began the practice of political satire at the mock-court (Dalkey) of King Stephen (Armytage), a singing pawnbroker ; at nineteen came to London to read law at the Middle Temple ; and before he was twenty-one had published (1800) a translation (as it were into scented soap) of the *Odes* of Anacreon,

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Thomas
Moore.

which was dedicated—through his earliest patron, Lord Moira, afterwards First Marquess of Hastings—to the Prince of Wales, and which (with his own excellent talent as an actor and singer) gave him the run of the very choicest Whig Society. It was followed (1801) by *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little, Esq.*—a gentleman who ‘died in his one-and-twentieth year’; who had ‘given much of his time to the study of the amatory writers’; and whose works were (therefore) ‘all the productions of an age when the passions very often give a colouring too warm to the imagination’; and in 1803 Lord Moira got him made Registrar to the Admiralty Court at Bermuda. He had looked for better patronage, but he was ever a man to make the best of things, and he made the best of this one. That is, he went to Bermuda, found and engaged a Deputy, travelled in Canada:—

Faintly as tolls the evening chime,
Our voices keep tune, and our oars keep time. . . .
Row, brothers, row, the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near and daylight’s past:—

and the United States; returned to England; published his *Odes and Epistles* (1806); and in 1807 began the *Irish Melodies* (Part x., 1834), which he sang with rare and peculiar art, which were long worth £500 a year to him, which are still singing here and there, and which, as translated by Gounet, and set to music by no less a man than Hector Berlioz, had, like the twice or thrice translated *Epicurean*, a certain part in the Romantic Renaissance of 1830. In 1811 he married, and in 1812 he published *The Twopenny Post-Bag*, and

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became Avenger-General to the Whigs, who were fresh from the Great Disappointment of 1811, and who exulted in his effect, whether he wept over a false and fallen Prince in an *Irish Melody* :—

Thomas
Moore.

When first I met thee, warm and young,
There shone such truth about thee,
And on thy lip such promise hung
I did not dare to doubt thee,
But go, deceiver, go, etc. :—

or took note (in *The Morning Chronicle* or *The Times*) of the run of things at Lady Hertford's :—

The house where you know
There's such good mutton cutlets and strong curaçoa :—

in Manchester Square, and gibed the wigs and stays and whiskers, the moral obliquities and the physical rotundities, in evidence at Carlton House. In 1817 he published *Lalla Rookh* ; for the copyright of which he received three thousand guineas ; which he dedicated to Samuel Rogers from 'His very grateful and Affectionate Friend' ; and whose vogue was so instant and so far-wandered that Luttrell was soon able to address him thus :—

I'm told, dear Moore, your lays are sung
(Can it be true, you lucky man ?)
At midnight in the Persian tongue
Along the streets of Ispahan.

In 1818 he went to Paris (with Rogers), and there produced that excellent set of pasquils, the first *Fudge Family*. Meanwhile the Deputy at Bermuda was found to have defaulted to the tune of £6000, and, to escape arrest, Moore went abroad, travelled in Italy—he stayed a few days at Venice

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Thomas
Moore.

with Byron, who gave him the MS. *Memoir*)—and then, retracing his steps, set up his rest in Paris, where he abode till, having compromised his debt to the Exchequer for £1000, he returned to England: there to publish his *Loves of the Angels* (1823), his *Captain Rock* (1824), his *Sheridan* (1825), his *Epicurean* (1827), his *Byron* (1830), and his *Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1831), to say nothing of innumerable lyrics and pasquinades. In 1835 he was put on the Civil List for a pension of £300; but his last years were miserable enough. For all the smirk in his love-songs and the sting (as of nettles) in his satire, he was a worthy and magnanimous little man—the best of sons, the most devout among husbands (he was horribly scandalised, you learn from his *Diary*, by the Marianna Segati business at Venice, and not less so by the sketch of Donna Inez in *Don Juan*), the most affectionate of fathers; and, having lost his only daughter in her girlhood, he was doomed to see the death of his second son (by consumption) at the very threshold of what promised to be an honourable career, and to watch the ruin of his heir, who ended, as one of the Foreign Legion, in an Algerine hospital. Such gleams of happiness as were his came through his countrymen, who wore him, tinsel and all, in their heart of hearts, and never failed to greet him with just such ovations (in terms of whisky and sentiment) as the Modern Scot reserves for the immortal memory of Burns. In the long-run his mind decayed: by 1847 he was ‘sinking’ (so he wrote to Rogers) ‘into a mere vegetable,’ and in reading of the end your sole feeling is one of

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regret that it came so late and took so long. As to ^{Thomas} his personal qualities, a single testimony, being Sir ^{Moore.} Walter's, will suffice:—'It would be a delightful addition to life,' he wrote in 1825, 'if Thomas Moore had a cottage within two miles of me.' For his poetry, it is the fashion to decry him; and it is a fact that his *Lalla Rookh* and his *Loves of the Angels* (a mild Whig Paradise done by a tame, suburban Byron) are glittering and 'conceited' enough to look tawdry, at the same time that they are so clever, and so breathless in their cleverness, as to be extremities of hard reading. But none in this century has surpassed him as a writer of light, brilliant, and scarifying insolence; while he was a master of cadence, and his songs—as *Bendemeer's Stream*, as *At the Mid-Hour of Night*, as *Doth Not a Meeting*, to name no more—have a rhythmical quality, at once exquisite and simple, for which you may quest in vain among the Minors of to-day.

For his connexion with Byron: it began in 1812, under such circumstances as are set forth below. It was said of him that he 'dearly loved a lord'; but to love a lord was in those days no crime—especially in an earnest Whig; and Sir Walter, albeit a fine, unalterable Tory, was no more averse from aristocratic intimacies than (to slide to the lowest rung of the ladder) the Radical Leigh Hunt. In any case, Moore had kept the company of peers—Moirs, Lansdownes, Hollands, and the like—since his *début* in 1800; and it is fair to argue that he was at least as strongly attracted by Byron's temperament and Byron's genius as he was touched by Byron's barony. It is possible—even probable—that Mr.

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Thomas
Moore.

Fraser Rae is justified in saying that he was jealous of Sheridan : like himself an Irishman, a commoner like himself, and like himself—but to far more splendid purpose than himself—a practical and social success. But in Byron's case there were no grounds for spleen ; for Byron, who recognised him instantly, and was ever his admirer and his friend, was not less manifestly his superior in poetry and genius than he was his superior by birth and fortune. In any event, it is certain that his attitude towards his ' noble friend ' (which being mannerly and correct, was Shelley's phrase and Scott's), while cordial in the extreme, was never (that I can see) unduly subservient. He received the dedication of *The Corsair* with a vast deal of pride (' They may say,' he wrote to Power, ' that the praise is laid on with a trowel, but at least it is a golden trowel that lays it on ') ; but he gave nothing in return for it but his very mediocre *Fables for the Holy Alliance* (1823). He accepted the MS. *Memoir* gratefully, but without humility—as a gift from friend to friend ; and he did his best for his friend's sake to keep at least a part of it for posterity. He avenged the memory of ' a late noble Lion ' on a certain ' small puppy dog ' (see *post*, p. 337) with exemplary thoroughness. He took up the work of writing the *Life* with such an independence of mind that he began by making himself hateful to the Lady-Byronites, and went on to scandalise the opposite faction in the end. In brief, I cannot find that (even in his revolts in the character of a ' Domestic Man ') he was ever other than loyal to a friendship which was one of the best things of his life.

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For the occasion of its beginning we must go back to 1806, and thence onward to 1809 and the publication of *English Bards*. In the former year, the Irish poet, exasperated by the strictures which Jeffrey had passed on his verses, challenged his critic to the arbitrament of mortal combat. The would-be duellists met at Chalk Farm—(they took a fancy to each other on the ground)—but the affair had taken wind (through William Spencer and Lord Fincastle) and they were arrested. Now Jeffrey's friend was that Francis Horner whom Sir Walter likened to Father Shandy's bull, and on him devolved the deadly work of loading the tools. He was far too serious and too highly cultured a Whig to know anything about firearms; and when the pistols were examined at Bow Street, it was found that one had a bullet in it, but the other had not. Then 'Enter Rumour'—on this occasion, as on many others, 'an Irish Journalist'—'painted full of tongues,' all holloaing that the pistols held no bullets. 'In consequence of this,' says Moore, 'I was induced to write a letter to the editor of one of the Journals'—'almost all' had gone with Rumour—'contradicting the falsehood that had been circulated, and stating briefly the real circumstances of the case.' This contradiction Byron did not see; and in *English Bards* he took it on him to tell the tale, in prose and verse, as the world loved to hear it told:—

Can none remember that eventful day,
That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,
When Little's leadless pistol met his eye,
And Bow Street myrmidons stood laughing by?

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Thomas Moore. 'In 1806 Messrs. Jeffrey and Moore met at Chalk Farm. The duel was prevented by the interference of the magistracy ; and, on examination, the balls of the pistols were found to have evaporated. This incident gave occasion to much waggy in the daily prints.' The First Edition of *English Bards* was anonymous ; but to the Second (published in the summer of the same year) Byron put his name. This at the time Moore did not know ; but when at last he learned who had belittled him, he put on his best duelling manner, and thus addressed his adversary :—

DUBLIN, *January 1, 1810.*

MY LORD,—Having just seen the name of 'Lord Byron' prefixed to a work entitled *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in which, as it appears to me, *the lie is given* to a public statement of mine, respecting an affair with Mr. Jeffrey some years since, I beg you will have the goodness to inform me whether I may consider your Lordship as the author of this publication.

I shall not, I fear, be able to return to London for a week or two ; but, in the meantime, I trust your Lordship will not deny me the satisfaction of knowing whether you avow the insult contained in the passages alluded to.

It is needless to suggest to your Lordship the propriety of keeping our correspondence secret.—I have the honour to be, your Lordship's very humble servant,

THOMAS MOORE.

22 Molesworth Street.

Byron, however, had gone abroad, and the letter got no further than Hodgson, who promised—but failed—to send it on to him. Byron returned to England in 1811, as we have seen ; and in the

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interval Moore had (as he puts it) 'taken upon himself obligations, both as husband and father, which make most men—and especially those who have nothing to bequeath—less willing to expose themselves to danger.' All the same, the Note to the 'leadless pistol' couplet rankled, and he resolved to have it out—as peaceably as might be—with its noble author. 'The death of Mrs. Byron,' he remarks, 'for some time delayed my purpose. But as soon after that event as was consistent with decorum, I addressed a letter to Lord Byron, in which, referring to my former communication, and expressing some doubts as to its having ever reached him, I restated, in pretty nearly the same words, the nature of the insult, which, as it appeared to me, the passage in his note was calculated to convey. "It is now useless," I continued, "to speak of the steps with which it was my intention to follow up that letter. The time which has elapsed since then, though it has done away neither the injury nor the feeling of it, has, in many respects, materially altered my situation ; and the only object which I have now in writing to your Lordship is to preserve some consistency with that former letter, and to prove to you that the injured feeling still exists, however circumstances may compel me to be deaf to its dictates at present. When I say 'injured feeling,' let me assure your Lordship that there is not a single vindictive sentiment in my mind towards you. I mean but to express that uneasiness, under (what I consider to be) a charge of falsehood, which must haunt a man of any feeling to his grave, unless the insult be retracted or atoned

Thomas
Moore.

ESSAYS

Thomas Moore. for ; and which, if I did *not* feel, I should, indeed, deserve far worse than your Lordship's satire could inflict upon me." In conclusion I added, that so far from being influenced by any angry or resentful feeling towards him, it would give me sincere pleasure if, by any satisfactory explanation, he would enable me to seek the honour of being henceforward ranked among his acquaintance.'

Samuel Rogers. SAMUEL ROGERS (1763-1855) was poet, wit, banker ; author of *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792), *The Voyage of Columbus* (1812), *Jacqueline* (published with *Lara*, 1814), *Italy* (1822-28), etc. Rich as he was, he never married. He was content to give the best breakfasts in London ; to speak bitterly and give generously (Campbell said :—'Borrow five hundred pounds of Rogers, and he will never say a word against you till you want to repay him') ; to patronise the arts and to write, with the most careful and fastidious pen in history—the *Columbus* took him fourteen years to write, the *Pleasures* seven, and the *Italy* fifteen—book after book of verses which are still enjoyable, howbeit a little as wax flowers are decorative, and to which, in the end, he fitted (at a cost of £15,000) over a hundred designs by Turner and Stothard, renowned among the masterpieces of English illustration. Byron, who to be sure was no critic, thought the world of him ('the Tithonus of poesy, immortal already'), as we shall see as we go on. But perhaps his best work is a certain epigram :—

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They say Ward has no heart, but I deny it ;
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it.

Samuel
Rogers.

In 1812 Byron dedicated *The Giaour* to him, and he lived to accept the dedication of *Master Humphrey's Clock* and to decline (1850) the Laureateship, and so make way for Tennyson.

Rogers wrote nobly enough of Byron in his *Italy* ; and Byron, though at Genoa he likened Rogers's achievement to an *hortus siccus*, was generally lavish of regard for 'the father of present poesy.' Remains that achievement in satire, the famous *Question and Answer* which, as I think, might have been dictated by the Devil :—

Nose and chin would shame a knocker,
Wrinkles that would puzzle Cocker,
Mouth which marks the envious scorner,
With a scorpion in each corner, etc.

It was published in *Fraser* (January 1833). I have somewhere read (I forget where) that, on the occasion of a visit from Rogers, Byron, who was excellent at what is called 'chaff,' not only gave his guest a riotous reception, but slipped this ferocious caricature of him, this Gillray-Daumier (so 'to speak) under his pillow. That it was done in jest is evident. As evident is it that Rogers, despite those grave and generous verses in the *Italy*, lived to resent it, and resent it bitterly. This if we may believe—and I see no reason why we may not—the late Charles Mackay. Talking with Rogers one day, he praised Byron, as a young man would ; and Rogers as steadily dispraised. Says Mackay :—
'You will at least acknowledge, sir, that he had fire.'

ESSAYS

Samuel
Rogers.

And to him Rogers:—‘Yes, *hell-fire*.’ With which remark the elegant, ambitious, careful poet-aster disappears.

Robert
Southey.

THE *Curse of Kehama* (1810) was the fourth, I believe, of those ‘epics’ whose frequent occurrence had already made Byron write (in *English Bards*) of a very worthy man but an extremely long-winded versifier, the ‘BALLADMONGER SOUTHEY’ (1774-1843):—

To him let Camoens, Milton, Tasso yield,
Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field :—

and even long afterwards to make him write again (in *Don Juan*):—

I know that what our neighbours call ‘*longueurs*,’
(We’ve not so good a *word*, but have the *thing*,
In that complete perfection which insures
An epic from Bob Southey every spring—)
Form not the true temptation which allures
The reader.

At the first time of writing, Byron did in nowise hate his Southey: he did but laugh at Southey’s so-called poetry, of which, by the way, the writer was inordinately vain (‘I was perfectly aware,’ he wrote to Murray of *Kehama*, ‘that I was planting acorns, while other men were setting Turkey beans. The oak will grow,’ etc.). Of Southey the man he knew nothing till 1813, when they met at Holland House. This was in September; and some two months after (November 22) Byron writes in his *Journal* thus:—‘Southey, I have not seen much of.

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His appearance is *Epic* ; and he is the only existing entire man of letters. All the others have some pursuit annexed to their authorship. His manners are mild, but not those of a man of the world, and his talents of the first order. His prose is perfect. Of his poetry there are various opinions : there is, perhaps, too much of it for the present generation ; —posterity will probably select. He has *passages* equal to anything. At present, he has a *party*, but no *public*—except for his prose writings. The *Life of Nelson* is beautiful.' Robert Southey.

But Southey, who, as young men will, had started life as a Republican, and in that character had written tragedies of *Wat Tyler* (1794) and *Inscriptions* in Martin the Regicide his honour :—

Dost thou ask his Crime ?
He had rebelled against his king,
And sat in judgment on him :—

had turned with time into so hardened and so militant a Tory that, when 'Poetical Pye' departed the world in this same year, he was chosen, Scott having said no in the interval, to wear the widowed wreath. Now, Byron was an aristocrat and an individual Radical ; besides, thus to forswear yourself was not his way ; and his references to Southey were for some time contemptuous enough. Still, for signs of positive and violent enmity we have to wait till the first years of the Exile, with the report, which Byron believed the Laureate to have set going in London, that at Geneva he and Shelley had 'formed a league of incest with two sisters,' Mary Godwin (1797-1851), that is, and Jane Clairmont (1797-

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Robert
Southey.

1879), who was presently to become the mother of Allegra:—this the daughter of William Godwin (1756-1836) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), that the daughter of William Godwin's second wife, the widow Clairmont, or Clements, whom he married in 1801. It was a piece of malignant gossip, picked up at a Genevese hotel; but under the circumstances it was not at all unnatural. Byron, deserted by his wife, 'accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and by private rancour,' had been fairly vomited by English society; Shelley, notoriously an atheist and a free-thinker in matters sexual, had left his wife for a woman with whom he was living in open adultery; and, while both the ladies were young and pretty, which made things bad, both the ladies were whole or parcel Godwin, which made things worse, for had not Mr. Godwin's first wife vindicated the Rights of Women? and had not Godwin himself declined all laws, and especially the marriage law, 'the worst of all'? None the less, Byron was, very naturally, exasperated by it; and one effect of the information that Southey was responsible for its introduction to talking England was that achievement in assault, the 'Dedication' (1818) suppressed, to Byron's chagrin, of the First and Second *Don Juan*. This, however, was very far from being the end. In 1819 appeared three cantos more, and Southey, in putting forth his ridiculous *Vision of Judgment*, attached to it an appropriate preface in which he opined that the poignancy of a deathbed repentance would nothing avail the author of such 'lascivious' stuff, talked of that author's 'Satanic

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spirit of pride and audacious impiety,' and hinted that here was a case for the Law. Byron retorted in his most savage and most scornful vein, remarking (truly enough), among other things, that there was 'something at once ludicrous and blasphemous in this arrogant scribbler of all work sitting down to deal damnation and destruction upon his fellow-creatures, with *Wat Tyler*, the Apotheosis of George the Third, and the Elegy on Martin the Regicide, all shuffled together in his writing-desk.' Southey, no more disposed than his antagonist to turn his cheek to the smiter, addressed a letter to *The London Courier* (5th January 1822), in which he explicitly denied that he had 'scattered abroad calumnies, knowing them to be such, against Lord Byron and others'; gloried in his attack on the Satanic School; defended himself with spirit and effect against the charge of being a scribbler of all work; protested that he had stuck the name of the author of *Don Juan* upon the gibbet, for reproach and infamy as long as it should endure; and ended by counselling Byron to 'attack him in rhyme' or not at all. Byron's reply was twofold. He challenged Southey, through Douglas Kinnaird; and he finished that *Vision of Judgment*, which is, by common consent, one of the master satires of the world. Of the challenge Southey never heard (Kinnaird suppressed it) till its author was dead; but he read the *Vision* in the first number of *The Liberal* that very year, and he must certainly have known that he shared with Brougham the very doubtful honour of being contemned and hated till the very end.

Robert
Southey.

ESSAYS

Robert
Southey.

To end *con la bocca dolce*, here is a touch of fun from Medwin's *Journal* (1824):—"On my calling on Lord Byron one morning, he produced *The Deformed Transformed*. Handing it to Shelley, he said—"Shelley, I have been writing a Faustish kind of drama: tell me what you think of it." After reading it attentively, Shelley returned it. "Well," said Lord B., "how do you like it?" "Least," replied he, "of anything I ever saw of yours. It is a bad imitation of *Faust*, and besides, there are two entire lines of Southey's in it." Lord Byron changed colour immediately, and asked hastily, "What lines?" Shelley repeated,

"And water shall see thee,
And fear thee, and flee thee.

They are in *The Curse of Kehama*." His Lordship instantly threw the poem into the fire. He seemed to feel no chagrin at seeing it consume—at least his countenance betrayed none, and his conversation became more gay and lively than usual. Whether it was hatred of Southey, or respect for Shelley's opinion,' etc.

William
Pole Tylney
Long
Wellesley.

WILLIAM POLE TYLNEY LONG WELLESLEY (1788-1857) was afterwards (1845) Fourth Earl of Mornington. The story of this 'most distinguished Briton' is one so full of insolence, adultery, thriftlessness, and the right Regency feeling for blackguardism and the Establishment, that I cannot choose but tell it with a certain particularity. In 1812, after a pursuit which itself was something of

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a scandal, he married Catherine, eldest daughter and co-heir of Sir James Tylney Long, Bart., of Draycot, Wilts, whose names he added to his own, and thus inspired a delicious line in *Rejected Addresses*:—

William
Pole Tylney
Long
Wellesley.

Long may Long Tilney Wellesley Long Pole live !

The lady had some £40,000 a year (her pin-money ran to £13,000) and Wellesley had nothing ; but 'the ancient and approved servants' of the Tylney family were dismissed at once, and in the March of 1813 there was tried at Chelmsford the case of 'The King v. Wellesley Pole Tylney Long Wellesley.' This was an action to try the right of the public to a way through Wanstead Park, and in the course of it Mr. Serjeant Shepherd, who was briefed for the defence, protested strongly against the right of common people to 'offend his (Pole's) princely mansion with the passage of unseemly vehicles.' In truth, the man was born magnificent ; his life was of a piece throughout ; he kept open house and a sumptuous table, had the finest hounds and horses on the country-side, retained an hundred and fifty servitors in Lincoln green, would have nothing but guineas in his pockets, and all the rest of it ; and by 1821 he was in such straits that in 1822 he had to take his wife abroad (tradition says that he dodged the traps in a boat, and boarded the packet far out at sea). They were living at Naples when (in 1823) they met a certain Captain Bligh, of the Coldstream Guards, and his wife Helena (*née* Pater-son), both of whom they had known in England. In the July of that year Mrs. Bligh left her

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William
Pole Tylney
Long
Wellesley.

husband's house in consequence of an intrigue with Wellesley ; but Wellesley filed an affidavit of denial before the British Vice-Consul, and persuaded Mrs. Wellesley to offer the injured lady the protection of her roof. This she did, but at Florence she had to turn the injured lady out of the house. From Italy the Wellesleys went to Paris (1824), whither Mrs. Bligh had preceded them ; and from Paris Mrs. Wellesley wrote to her father-in-law (Lord Maryborough, a most respectable man : elder brother to the Duke of Wellington, Master of the Mint in 1815, Master of the Buckhounds in 1828), that, if Wellesley would have done with Mrs. Bligh, she would forgive the man 'his profligate and unprincipled conduct,' and provide for the woman out of her own income. Lord and Lady Maryborough went to Paris and did their best ; but it was to no purpose ; so that Mrs. Wellesley took her children to England, and in the June of 1825 began to sue for a divorce in the Ecclesiastical Court. About that time, too, Wellesley and Mrs. Bligh, who had been playing at man and wife in divers *gîtes* in France and Holland, crossed to London ; and on July 7 Wellesley drove Bligh to his wife's house in Clarges Street, for the purpose of getting hold of one or more of his children. He entered the house, when Bligh drove round to Mme. Vestris's, there to wait the event ; but Mrs. Wellesley heard his voice, escaped (with her daughter) by the kitchen door, served him with a citation for divorce, and filed a bill in Chancery to make her children wards of the Court, after which the errant couple scuttled back to France. In the

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September of that year Mrs. Wellesley died, William Pole Tylney Long Wellesley. enjoining her sisters, the Misses Long, to resist to the utmost any attempt on Wellesley's part to remove the children; and in 1827—(in which year he had to pay swingeing damages to Captain Bligh, as defendant in a suit for *crim. con.*)—Wellesley brought an action against their guardian, his uncle Wellington, to recover possession of them. In delivering judgment, the Chancellor (Eldon) remarked that they had it in evidence that in July 1824 Wellesley had 'a venereal tumour removed from his eye by Dr. Southcote'; that Southcote had sworn that, to his knowledge, Wellesley when in Paris got blackguard children to come to the back of the house to teach his children to blaspheme; that Mr. Pitman, the tutor of Wellesley's choice, testified that he had 'heard the eldest infant plaintiffs use some very disgusting expressions, and utter the most coarse and vulgar oaths in French,' and the boy William, being rebuked for his obscenities, had replied that 'his father liked it'; that a letter of Wellesley's was before the Court (dated February 9, 1825) containing such phrases as 'If the fellow be a sportsman, . . . damn his infernal soul to hell'; that in another letter he bade his boys to 'study hard, but as soon as you have completed your tasks, go out in all weathers, and play hell and tommy—make as much riot as your tongues can admit—chase cats, dogs, and women, old and young, but spare my game'; and that Dr. Bulkeley, the physician who attended the Wellesleys at Naples, and who afterwards resided and travelled with them, had sworn that W. P. L.

ESSAYS

William
Pole Tylney
Long
Wellesley:

Wellesley said, in the presence of his children, 'Debauch all the women you meet with, young and old':—For all which reasons he, Eldon, would 'deserve to be hunted out of society if he hesitated for one moment to say, that he would sooner forfeit his life than permit the girl Victoria to go in the company of such a woman, or into the care and protection of a man who had the slightest connexion with that woman.' With incredible magnificence the Plaintiff returned to the charge and published *Two Letters to the Right Hon. Earl Eldon, Lord Chancellor, etc. etc. etc., with official and other documents and additional notes.* 'By the Hon. W. L. Wellesley. Third Edition. London: John Miller, Pall Mall, 1827.' His defence—'If shape that can be called which shape hath none'—is monumental. His wife, he says, 'was a most amiable woman . . . but she had not profited by education to the degree that might have been expected,' and that her letters were mostly written by her lady's-maid. He throws the blame on her sisters, who 'entertain principles and doctrines hostile to the Established Church.' The real cause of dislike is revealed elsewhere: it is that 'a few years after my marriage I was called upon to pay the young ladies their portions'—£15,000 each, *plus* interest—'making the whole amount to nearly £40,000.' He further contends that during Mrs. Wellesley's minority, and afterwards, she gave 'very large sums of money' (a commodity he could properly appreciate) to Lady Catherine and the Misses Long. But it was understood that the Misses Long:—and be it remembered that 'sec-

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tarian troubles have operated upon the minds of the elder sister . . . to such a degree that it can scarcely be called rational'; while 'the younger, to a temper the most violent, adds manners the least refined':—should transfer their portions, charged on the Long estates, to himself and wife. The Longs, it would seem, were Methodists, and Wellesley, a pillar of the Establishment, hated Methodism, as Sir Andrew hated a Puritan. The ladies, in fact, had sat too sedulously at the feet of one Barry, sometime resident apothecary to Sir James Long:—'A man of sectarian principles, and a great collector of sectarian tracts (it was tracts of this nature which I was in the habit of burning after my marriage; not because they were religious, but because they were wild, fanatic, and not in accordance with the true spirit of Christianity) with which he supplied the different members of the family,' etc. etc. etc. Barry, by the way, had made himself still more obnoxious to this sound Churchman by proposing that the Long estates should, in the event of there being no male issue of the Wellesley-Long marriage, be re-settled on the Misses Long, the defender of the true faith to receive an annuity of £10,000.

William
Pole Tynley
Long
Wellesley.

In 1828 Wellesley married 'the daughter of Colonel Paterson and widow of Captain Bligh of the Coldstream Guards' (*The Times*, 4th July 1857). But, to quote the same authority, this second union 'would appear to have been no better assorted than the first, to judge from the fact that, since her husband's accession to the title, Lady Mornington has repeatedly appeared in our

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William
Pole Tylney
Long
Wellesley.

columns as an applicant for relief at the metropolitan police-courts in consequence of having been left destitute by her husband, and chargeable to the parish.' In the end the old blood died of heart disease; and on 4th July 1857 an inquest was held (by Mr. Wakely) at the Coachmakers' Arms, Bentinck Street, Manchester Square:—'Dr. Probert, the Earl's medical man, said the late Earl had been very badly off so far as pecuniary affairs were concerned, and until the last two years had wanted the necessaries of life. . . . Major W. J. Richardson, a friend of the Earl, said he did not consider that he [the Earl] had been lately in pecuniary want, for his cousin, the Duke of Wellington, allowed him £10 a week': which, to be sure, was little enough 'for a man who once had £100,000 a year.'

John Galt;

IN 1809 GALT, who had left Greenock and the Custom House for London and Letters (he had the usual tragedy in his pocket) as early as 1804, was obliged, for his health's sake, to go South. At Gibraltar one day, 'in a withering levanter,' which confined him to the library, he saw Byron, and noted, without knowing who he was, the 'neatness and simplicity,' and at the same time the 'peculiarity of style,' which distinguished his attire, the fact that his 'physiognomy,' though disfigured by what was 'undoubtedly the occasional scowl of some unpleasant reminiscence'—(it appears by the sequel that this 'made a stronger impression upon me than it did upon many others')—was 'prepossessing and intelligent,' while 'the general cast of his features

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was impressed with elegance and character.' The John Galt. next day Galt took ship for Sardinia, and, when Byron and Hobhouse came aboard the packet, it seemed to him that 'in the little bustle of embarking their luggage his Lordship affected . . . more aristocracy than befitted his years on the occasion.' Also, he wouldn't put on the passenger at all (as Hobhouse did): on the contrary, he 'sat on the rail, leaning on the mizzen shrouds, inhaling, as it were, poetic sympathy from the gloomy rock, then dark and stern,' etc. About the third day out from Gibraltar 'Byron relented from his rapt mood . . . and became playful'; produced pistols, and approved himself the best shot on board at a bottle, 'but not pre-eminently so'; helped the captain to catch a turtle—'I rather think two'; and did his part (we may assume) in hooking a shark, 'part of which was dressed for breakfast,' but 'tasted without relish,' for 'your shark is but a cannibal dainty.' And so on, and so on. Galt was amused by and pleased with Hobhouse, who told him bawdy stories—(stories 'more after the matter and manner of Swift than of Addison')—and was 'altogether an advantageous specimen of a well-educated English gentleman.' But Byron, who ate little, and drank less, and persisted in 'sitting amidst the shrouds and rattlings in the tranquillity of the moonlight, churming an inarticulate melody,' seemed 'almost apparitional' to him—suggested, in fact, that classic of the *genre*, 'a mystery in a winding-sheet crowned with a halo.' 'Tis true there were times when he was 'familiar and earthy'; but, as a rule, 'his dwelling was amidst the murk

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John Galt, and the mist, and the home of his spirit in the abysm of the storm, and the hiding-places of guilt.' Even at two-and-twenty you couldn't meet him—or rather Galt couldn't—'without experiencing a presentiment that he was destined to execute some singular and ominous purpose.' Thus Galt, some twenty years after the event, of Byron at sea; and as Byron admitted to Lady Blessington that, while he saw that Galt was 'mild, equal, and sensible,' he 'took no pains to cultivate his acquaintance,' the sentiment may be accepted as natural, if the expression may not. But at Cagliari—(where Galt rather thinks that he may very possibly have seen the real original of Lara in the pit of the theatre)—the acquaintance ripened; on the voyage to Sicily 'the champagne was uncorked and in the finest condition'; and at Malta, despite the lack of 'a salute from the batteries' (which Byron expected), it was found to be still on tap, for Byron and Hobhouse had to begin by 'begging a bed and a morsel for the night' of a particular friend of Galt's; and 'God forgive me!' says Galt, with a certain irrelevancy, 'but I partook of Byron's levity at the idea of personages so consequential wandering destitute in the streets,' etc. There is more of Malta, and there is much of Greece (Galt and Byron met again at Athens), but I shall sample Galt no further. Enough to say that after the return to England, and at a time when Byron 'could not well be said to be a celebrated character'—a time, in fact, when *Childe Harold* was known to Murray and Dallas alone—'I was frequently with him.' Then, however, came a tiff over *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), the story of

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which, as Galt insisted, was—not Byron's but—John Galt. Galt's. Byron protested, and the tiff was ended, for the time being, by a very friendly letter. But the relation was not one made to last. At this time Byron, as he confessed to Lady Blessington, 'was in no frame of mind to form an impartial opinion' of Galt:—'His mildness and equanimity struck me even then; but, to say the truth, his manner had not deference enough for my then aristocratical taste, and, finding I could not awe him into a respect sufficiently profound for my sublime self, either as a peer or an author, I felt a little grudge against him,' etc. If I add that Byron thought highly of Galt's novels (he read *The Entail* three times), and spoke very sensibly and well of the peculiar quality of his gift, I shall have said enough of Galt and Byron during Byron's life. The worst came after Byron's death, when Galt read (in Moore) an entry in one of Byron's *Diaries* that he (Galt) was 'almost the last person on whom any one would commit literary larceny.' That nettled him, and, in *The Life of Lord Byron* (1830), a work which, as we have seen, is rather well meant than well written, but which is still worth reading, he reflects (1) that *Childe Harold* was preceded by 'a poem in the Spenserian measure,' which was 'called *The Unknown*,' which was 'intended to describe . . . pilgrim . . . the scenes I expected to visit,' and on which 'I was occasionally engaged . . . during the passage with Lord Byron from Gibraltar to Malta, and he knew what I was about'; (2) that 'I wrote at Athens a burlesque poem on nearly the same subject' as *The Curse of Minerva*, that the

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John Galt; MS. was 'sent to his Lordship in Asia Minor, and returned to me through Mr. Hobhouse,' and that 'his *Curse of Minerva* I saw for the first time in 1828 in Galignani's edition of his works'; and (3) that, though 'his Lordship disdained to commit any larceny on me, and no doubt the following passage from *The Giaour* is perfectly original' (follows the passage), yet 'not the most judicious action of all my youth was to publish certain,' etc., and 'his Lordship had the printed book in his possession long before,' etc., 'and may have read the following passage,' etc. etc. etc. It might be inferred from this that the creator of the inimitable Micah Balquhadder and the scarce less admirable Lady Grippy (as who should say a Glasgow Mrs. Gamp) was not remarkable for humour in private life. But, however that be, he was the only true begetter of the 'apparitional' Byron—the Byron who was as a mystery in a winding-sheet crowned with a halo, at the same time that he was 'distinguished for superior personal elegance, particularly in his bust.'

Lady
Jersey.

'SUPPOSE that you were in love with a girl, and that her father refused his consent to the union, what would you do?' Thus, some time in 1782, John, Tenth Earl of Westmoreland, to Child the banker. 'Do?' was the answer: 'why, run away with her, to be sure!' That very night ('tis said), Lord Westmoreland and his interlocutor's one child eloped together, and took the road from Berkeley Square to Gretna Green. The father

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followed 'hot and instant in their trace,' and in the end so nearly ran them down that Lord Westmore-^{Lady Jersey.} land had to stand up in the fleeing chaise, and shoot one of the banker's leaders: which happy yet desperate expedient enabled him to make good his retreat. Three months after the wedding, Robert Child died, bequeathing his very splendid fortune to the first daughter, who should be called Sarah, after his own dead wife. This was LADY SARAH SOPHIA FANE; and on the 23rd May 1804 she married George Villiers, Fifth Earl of Jersey, twice Lord Chamberlain of the Household, twice Master of the Horse—(according to Byron, as reported by Lady Blessington, 'Pegasus was perhaps the only horse of whose points Lord Jersey couldn't be a judge')—and, Lord Malmesbury says, 'in manner and appearance *le plus grand seigneur* of his time.'

From the beginning to the end the Countess of Jersey, who was extremely beautiful, was the greatest of great ladies *de par le monde*, and wielded an influence in society which none, perhaps, but Lady Palmerston's could rival. She was one of the Committee of Lady Patronesses which decided who should, and who should not, be admitted to Almack's, the assembly rooms in King Street, St. James's Street, founded in 1769, and then 'the Seventh Heaven of the fashionable world' (GRONOW): so that, after 1815, 'to be excluded from them was fatal to any one who aspired to belong to the *élite* of fashion' (LORD WILLIAM LENNOX). To Almack's, after Waterloo, Lady Jersey imported 'the favourite quadrille, which has so long remained popular' (a French print, copied

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Jersey.

into Gronow's First Set of *Reminiscences*, shows her in act to dance it, her fellows being Lord and Lady Worcester, and Clanronald Macdonald); and at Almack's (1819) Ticknor, who describes her 'as a beautiful creature with a great deal of talent, taste, and elegant accomplishment,' stood by on a memorable occasion when the Duke of Wellington (a great society man: whose nickname was The Beau) was announced at seven minutes past eleven of the clock, and heard her say, 'with emphasis and distinctness,' these awful words:—'Give my compliments—Lady Jersey's compliments—to the Duke of Wellington, and say that she is very glad that the first enforcement of the rule of exclusion is such that hereafter no one can complain of its application. *He cannot be admitted.*' [It is worth noting that once before the Duke had been denied his place in Paradise, for that he came to look for it in trousers, and not in breeches as a reputable angel should.] Gronow, who did not love the Countess, complains that, in 1814—when the Committee consisted of herself, the Countess Lieven, Lady Castlereagh, Lady Sefton, the Countess Cowper, Mrs. Drummond Burrell, and the Princess Esterhazy,—'her bearing,' as compared to Lady Cowper's, 'was that of a theatrical tragedy queen,' and that 'whilst attempting the sublime, she frequently made herself simply ridiculous, being inconceivably rude, and in her manner often ill-bred.' But there were two Lady Jerseys, it would seem; and this one was the leader of *ton*, whom Byron described to Lady Blessington as 'the veriest tyrant that ever governed Fashion's fools, and compelled them to shake their

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caps and bells as she willed it.' The other, the Lady Jersey of private life, was not at all that sort of person. In the May of this same year Byron, who was ever her devout admirer—('Does she still retain her beautiful cream-coloured complexion and raven hair?' he asked at Genoa)—and who was very soon to see her dancing with the Czar :—

He wore but a starless blue coat, and in kersey-
mere breeches, waltzed round with the Countess of
Jersey,
Who, lovely as ever, looked just as delighted
With majesty's presence, as those she invited :—

inscribed to her the famous *Condolatory Address* :—
—'On the Occasion of the Prince Regent Returning her Picture to Mrs. Mee.' 'Don't be very angry with me,' he writes, in a note (unpublished) communicated to me by the present Earl. 'If ill-done, the shame can only be mine. . . . They were begun and finished since ten o'clock to-night, so that, whether good or bad, they were done in good earnest. Do with them what you please. Whether they amuse your friends or light your fire, I shall be content, so they don't offend you.' This is scarce the sort of letter which a man would write to 'a theatrical tragedy queen'; nor is a Siddons *manquée* suggested by Sheridan's description (1815 : reported by Lady Granville and quoted by Mr. Fraser Rae) of his 'Silence' (so he called her) as 'a pretty rushing babbling stream, never stagnant.' [From this of Sheridan's about his 'Silence,' by the way, you understand why Byron 'used to long to tell her that she spoiled her looks by excessive animation,' for 'eyes, tongue,

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Lady
Jersey.

head, and arms were all in motion at once.'] Take, too, the acutely observed, not altogether friendly portrait which Charles Greville painted of her after staying at Middleton in 1819:—

1819, *January* 17th—'... It was very agreeable, and the house extremely comfortable. Lady Jersey is an extraordinary woman, and has many good qualities; surrounded as she is by flatterers and admirers, she is neither proud nor conceited. She is full of vivacity, spirit, and good-nature, but the wide range of her sympathies and affections proves that she has more general benevolence than particular sensibility in her character. She performs all the ordinary duties of life with great correctness, because her heart is naturally good; and she is, perhaps, from her temperament, exposed to fewer temptations than the generality of her sex. She is deficient in passion and in softness (which constitute the greatest charm in women), so that she excites more of admiration than of interest; in conversation she is lively and pleasant, without being very remarkable, for she has neither wit, nor imagination, nor humour; her understanding is active rather than strong, and her judgment is too often warped by prejudice to be sound. She has a retentive memory and a restless mind, together with a sort of intellectual arrangement, with which she appears rather to have been gifted by nature than to have derived from the cultivation of her reasoning faculties.'

It may have been a mistake in taste for Lady Jersey to identify herself (as she did) with the cause of the ill-guided and ill-starred Caroline of Brunswick (whose worst enemy her mother-in-law, the Dowager Countess, had been); and it may be that the Regent, in turning her picture out of his Gallery of Beauties, was within his rights as both Gentleman and King. But the enduring argument

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in her favour is that, despite the weight and manner of her tyranny, she so developed and consolidated her social influence that in the end, Lord Malmesbury says, she was 'almost a European personage, for no crowned head or representative of royalty ever landed in England without immediately calling on her, and being found in her *salon* during his stay.' Lady Jersey.

She died at eighty-two, having survived her husband (by some seventeen years) and her three daughters—(one of them married an Esterhazy, while the second eloped, as her grandmother before her)—and displayed to the last 'the courage and coolness for which she was famous' (MALMESBURY). These qualities were certainly conspicuous in her treatment of Byron at the lowest pitch of his fortune. On the eve of his departure into banishment, when all London was ringing with the rumour of his misdeeds, and there was scarce a voice which dared uplift itself in his defence, she took the lists for him with equal benevolence and intrepidity, 'made a party for him expressly,' and received him with a serene and gracious 'kindness,' which he remembered gratefully until the last. The 'party' was a failure. Most of the guests were uncivil or worse, and only one, Miss Mercer, afterwards Lady Keith, was cordial. 'Nothing short, perhaps,' says Moore, 'of that high station in society which a life as blameless as it is brilliant has secured to her, could have placed beyond all reach of misrepresentation, at that moment, such a compliment to one marked by the world's censure so deeply.' This is probably true. In any case, it was Byron's last taste of

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English Society, and on the lady's side 'twas well and valiantly done. Byron's own account of it was the page which Moore regretted worst of all in the MS. *Memoir*. In effect, Byron's true demon was upon him: he was within a year or two of *Beppo* and the *Vision* and the early cantos of *Don Juan*. What wildernesses of unexceptionable printed matter one would cheerfully resign, to know that this piece of his writing had escaped the grate in Albemarle Street, and would presently be given to the world!

Lady
Caroline
Lamb.

BORN PONSONBY, LADY CAROLINE (1785-1828) was daughter to the Third Earl of Bessborough, by Henrietta Frances, daughter to the First Earl Spencer, and sister to the beautiful Duchess, Georgiana of Devonshire. Reared in a *milieu* of uncommon state and splendour and self-indulgence, at ten years old she made verses, but could neither write nor read. Then she went to live with her grandmother, the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, and, having an active body and a quick and apprehensive mind, learned French and Italian, dabbled in the classics, drew, painted, sang, danced, rode—became, in short, the parcel-blue and parcel-beauty who was presently to queen it at Melbourne House. At nineteen she fell in with William Lamb (1779-1848), then the penniless younger son of Penistone Lamb, First Viscount Melbourne; and at twenty (1805), he being then his father's heir and a man six years her elder, she married him. It was a love-match more or less; and both the parties lived to

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regret it. Meanwhile, she bore him a son ; and for a certain while, despite her whims and humours and frivolities—despite, too, a distribution of energy among so many points, that to read of her to-day is to conjure up a sort of Zimri-in-Petticoats—things went well enough between them. But, as Mr. Dunckley has noted of her in the admirable sketch inserted in his *Lord Melbourne*—(in ‘The Queen’s Prime Ministers’)—her whole life ‘was composed of a series of episodes in which love, or what passed for it, played a leading part.’ Vain, selfish, wilful, spoiled, she was one of those bravos of the heart who, while they must still be challenging—challenging for the excitement of combat and the glory of victory—yet often lose their heads, forget their prime object, and are left hurt or dead upon the ground. And, as she was unscrupulous in attack, so was she disadvantaged by defeat to the loss, not only of dignity and self-control, but also of all self-respect and all care for others. She could jilt, it seems, without a pang—as many women can ; but she might not endure disdain—as, for that matter, what woman ever could? And, as she knew not reticence, nor cared twopence who suffered so she had her way, it is not astonishing that in a very few years her husband’s regard, for all his affable, genial, affectionate nature, was something the worse for wear.

Even so, the time of real trouble was to come. In the February of 1812 Byron put forth the First and Second *Harold*, and awoke to find himself—not merely famous, but—famous as English poet never was before. Lady Caroline saw the book at

Lady
Caroline
Lamb.

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Lady
Caroline
Lamb.

Rogers's (as Moore had done), and, after disdaining the writer openly (at Lady Westmoreland's) and confiding to her Diary that she thought him 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know,' felt suddenly aware that here was a worthy opposite in the duel of sex, and (not to crack the wind of the poor metaphor) at once proceeded to call him out. Her challenge was accepted, and in the sequel her reputation was so badly winged that she never recovered the use of it. Byron dined with her the day after Lady Holland made them known. He called, she says in a statement penned in dustier and less 'sanitised' days than ours:—'Rogers and Moore were standing by me. I was on the sofa; I had just come in from riding. I was filthy and heated. When Lord Byron was announced, I flew out of the room to wash myself. When I returned, Rogers said, "Lord Byron, you are a happy man. Lady Caroline has been sitting in all her dirt with us, but when you were announced, she flew to beautify herself." Lord Byron wished to come and see me at eight o'clock when I was alone; that was my dinner-hour. I said he might. From that moment for more than nine months he almost lived at Melbourne House.' In no great while, that is, her 'goings-on' with Byron became the scandal they remained until the end. She sat with him, drove with him (in close carriages) from routs and plays, wrote verses to him, would even have had him take her jewels and pawn them for his own use—in short, did everything she could to compromise herself and him, and, above all, to absorb him—genius and love and glory and will—to the last atom. She achieved

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the inevitable effect. He's a fool, says an expert in human life and destiny, who pins his faith upon (among other things) a boy's love; and Byron, if he were no more a boy, was at all events too young and vain, too brilliant and too irresistible—especially too irresistible—for constancy. So, from being a goddess, Lady Caroline Lamb. Lady Caroline was in due course revealed a bore of the first magnitude: a bore who rowed you in public, and wrote you reproaches by the ream, and tried to storm your chambers in disguise, and at supper sought to mangle herself with table-knives, or essayed to cast herself out of ball-room windows. What was there for it but division? There was an interview, and there were letters. [One very frantic, desperate, and loverlike elucubration from Byron, in which the writer protests himself ready 'to obey, to honour, love, and fly with you, *when, where, and how* yourself . . . may determine': the sort of composition, in fact, which young men achieve in certain circumstances, and then make haste to blush for or to forget: is printed in Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson's *The Real Lord Byron* (i. 261-3) from a copy 'made from the original MS.'] But no sort of *modus vivendi* was possible, and, to smooth things over, Lady Bessborough took her deliberately impulsive child to Ireland, to be out of Byron's way. Still, they corresponded; and after some time, Lady Caroline intimated her intention of returning to London and her place in Byron's life and heart. The answer to this intimation, written upon paper stamped with the coronet and the initials of a detested rival (Lady Oxford, it is said), was 'that cruel letter that I have published

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Caroline
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in *Glenarvon* ; it destroyed me ; I lost my brain. I was bled, leeches ; kept'—(thus the heroine to her friend, Lady Morgan, the Wild Irish Girl)—'for a week in the filthy "Dolphin" at Rock.' Here is the document, or as much of it as Lady Caroline chose to publish :—

LADY CAROLINE LAMB,—I am no longer your lover ; and since you oblige me to confess it by this truly unfeminine persecution, learn that I am attached to another, whose name it would of course be dishonest to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself. And as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice : correct your vanity, which is ridiculous ; exert your absurd caprices on others ; and leave me in peace.—Your obedient servant,

BYRON.

A 'cruel letter' ? Doubtless. But what is, what has ever been, more cruel than the man a woman has sickened of those favours which she yet insists on thrusting on his acceptance ? The situation is as old as Society, and Byron's way of ending it was, and is, and will ever remain, a convention of the game :—

The Eternal Saki from that bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like him, and will pour.

And for Lady Caroline, as for himself, it was not an end but a beginning. Lady Melbourne, William Lamb's mother, was always his very good friend ; he had proposed to her kinswoman, Miss Milbanke, in the autumn of the *Harold* year itself ; in 1814

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he proposed again ; in the January of 1815 came the Marriage ; and on the 25th April 1816 followed the Exile. In the interval Lady Caroline had not been idle ; and, whatever her effect in the part of a Lapland Witch, whatever her share in the storm which drove her quondam lover from England, it is certain, at least, that she had him burned in effigy (she sent him an account of the proceedings), certain that she wrote and published *Glenarvon* in the year of his departure, and certain that in *Glenarvon* she did her best against his fame and him. She wrote this wretched book, so she tells you, in a page's habit, and at dead of night ; and for a motto she adapted two famous verses from *The Corsair* :—

Lady
Caroline
Lamb.

He left a name to all succeeding times,
Linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes.

But when Byron had read, he had no more to say of *Glenarvon* than this :—‘ It seems to me, that if the authoress had written the *truth*, and nothing but the truth—the whole truth—the romance would not only have been more *romantic*, but more entertaining. As for the likeness, the picture can't be good.—I did not sit long enough.’

His first sentence may well have given Disraeli the idea of a matchless scene in *Venetia*. For the rest, the sole change suffered by that antic disposition which was Lady Caroline's was for the worse. In 1824 it chanced that, riding out one morning, she saw a funeral pass the gates, and, asking whose it was, was told that it was Byron's. It was her first news of his death, and she took to her bed in a state of utter collapse, nor recovered till she had

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sent for Edward Bulwer, then a boy of twenty-one, added him to her list of opposites, given him a rival in the person of a certain Mr. Russell, 'a fashionable beau, extremely handsome, but dull, insipid, and silly,' and sent him so far off his wits with jealousy, that in the end he must have recourse to flight and the loss of twenty ounces of blood.—(DUNCKLEY.) By this time, in fact, her eccentricities had grown to such a pitch of extravagance that there was nothing for William Lamb but to leave her. This he did (1824), as amiably as he did everything; but in 1828, the year which saw him Viscount Melbourne, she died in his company forgiven and at peace.

A handful of opinions about her. I think it must be she of whom Lady Byron (July-August 1815) writes thus to 'Dearest Sis' (Augusta Leigh):— 'She has never called on me, and when I made her a vis—(sic) with my mother, was very dignified. . . . She asked after B——!—Such a wicked-looking cat I never saw.'—(Morrison Autographs.) Disraeli, greatly daring, essayed to realise her in the Mrs. Felix Lorraine of *Vivian Grey*. After *Glenarvon* Rogers dismissed her in a famous couplet from Pope:—

From furious Sappho scarce a milder fate,
Poxed by her love and libelled by her hate.

'It is at least extraordinary,' Harness writes, 'that, while thus courted and admired, if his (Byron's) life were as licentious as some have represented, the only scandal which disturbed the decorum of Society'— (the Society, be it remembered, which had not long lost 'Old Q.', that indefatigable virtuoso, so to

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speak, which had still its Regent and its Yar-
 mouth, its Harriet Wilson and its Mrs. Clarke, to
 name but these, and to which *crim. con.* was an
 essential of being)—‘and with which Byron’s name
 is connected, did not originate in any action of his
 but in the insane and unrequited passion of a
 woman.’ Last of all, Sir Walter :—‘Poor soul! if
 a godlike face and godlike powers could have made
 any excuse for devilry, to be sure she had one.’
 Withal she was a true histrion of the heart, had a
 right instinct for what she deemed the *beau rôle* and
 the centre of the stage, and could play her part to
 suit all humours. ‘*That beautiful pale face is my
 fate*’: so (as she told Scott’s friend) she told herself
 in the beginning: and, writing to Murray (13th
 July 1824):—‘I am sure I am very sorry I ever
 said one word against him.’ Each of these utter-
 ances is what is called a *mot de la fin*; and each is
 capital of its kind.

BYRON began, of course, by lumping SCOTT with
 Jeffrey. Both were products of Edinburgh; so
 both were equally damnable, and both must be (and
 both were) brought forth and scourged before the
 people, the one as a hackney poet—(‘my crime,’
 says Scott, ‘was having written a poem . . . for a
 thousand pounds’)—the other as a venal critic.
 Scott was no better pleased than another man of
 spirit would be in the circumstances; and soon after
 the publication of *English Bards* you find him writ-
 ing (7th August 1809) of ‘a young whelp of a Lord
 Byron,’ and noting that ‘it is not his Lordship’s

Lady
 Caroline
 Lamb.

Sir Walter
 Scott.

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Sir Walter Scott. merit, though it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success.' Again (4th April 1812) he tells Joanna Baillie that *Childe Harold* is 'a clever poem, but gives no good symptoms of the writer's heart or morals,' that 'it must require impudence at least equal to the noble Lord's other powers, to claim sympathy for the *ennui* arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours,' etc. etc. But, once made, the acquaintance, which was of Scott's seeking, was never crossed by so much as the shadow of a shade. As matter of fact, in nothing which the great and good Sir Walter ever wrote are sanity of judgment and soundness of humanity more conspicuous than in (1) the 'interesting communication' with which, years after the event, he 'found time, in the midst of all his marvellous labours for the world,' to 'favour' Byron's biographer; and (2) the reflections on Byron's death which he contributed (1824) to an Edinburgh newspaper. They met not often, nor corresponded very vigorously; but the understanding of these two radiant and distinguished spirits was none the less complete for that. 'No one,' Scott writes to Murray (10th January 1817), 'can honour Lord Byron's genius more than I do, and no one had so great a wish to love him personally, though personally we had not the means of becoming very intimate'; and he goes on to regret that he had not interfered, as he might have done, in Byron's 'family distress (deeply to be deprecated, and in which probably he can yet be excused),' for the reason that he 'always seemed to give me credit for wishing him sincerely well.'

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Thus Scott to Murray ; and thus Murray, concerning Scott, to Byron (22nd September 1818):—Sir Walter Scott.

‘The Saturday and Sunday previous I passed most delightfully with Walter Scott, who was incessant in his inquiries after your welfare. He entertains the noblest sentiments of regard towards you, and speaks of you with the best feelings.’ I might go on, but this is enough on the one part. On the other, I shall only note that, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* once off the writer’s stomach, Byron never wavered in his admiration and respect for Scott. ‘There was something highly gratifying to the feelings’—of the Countess of Blessington—‘in witnessing the warmth and cordiality that Byron’s countenance displayed in talking of Sir Walter Scott,’ whom, for the rest, he ‘never named but with praise and affection.’ ‘We don’t say “Mr. Cæsar,”’ he writes, by way of apology for speaking of his friend as plain Scott ; the Novels, ‘a literature in themselves,’ are among the books he loves best and reads most ; Scott’s review of the Third *Harold* gives him extreme pleasure ; to Scott *Cain* is dedicated, ‘by his obliged friend and faithful servant,’ (1821) ; and Scott, the ‘Ariosto of the North,’ of the Fourth *Harold* (1817)—‘meaning thereby of all countries which are not the South,’—the ‘Monarch of Parnassus, and the most English of bards’ of a certain ‘triangular *gradus ad Parnassum*’ (1813), accepts ‘with feelings of great obligation’ Byron’s ‘very flattering proposal’ to prefix the name of Walter Scott to his ‘very grand and tremendous drama.’ It is well at all times to remember that Byron’s name, if it stank in the

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Sir Walter Scott. nostrils of Georgian London, was always sweet, and sweet enough, in those of the best good man of his time.

Lady
Oxford.

HOPPNER'S portrait of LADY OXFORD (1774-1824)—one of his best; exhibited in 1798—shows a woman amiable as beautiful—the very woman, in fact, of the letter from Uvedale Price, with which I end this Note. It seems to have been Lady Oxford of whom Byron spoke thus at Genoa (BLESSINGTON, *Conversations*, etc., 1834): —‘Even now the autumnal charms of Lady —— are remembered by me with more than admiration. She resembled a landscape by Claude Lorraine, with a setting sun, her beauties enhanced by the knowledge that they were shedding their last dying leaves, which threw a radiance round. A woman . . . is only grateful for her *first* and *last* conquests. The first of poor dear Lady ——’s was achieved before I entered on this world of care, but the *last*, I do flatter myself, was reserved for me, and a *bonne bouche* it was.’ If this be a memory of the Countess, it is a good enough commentary on the fact that Byron took Thyrnham Court to be near the Oxfords next year; and that he thought of going to Sicily this year in Lord Oxford’s train, and did actually get as far as Portsmouth. Portsmouth was the end; for the Oxfords were long abroad, and Byron lived his life at top speed. Death came to both these lovers in the same year. And on the occasion of her departure, Uvedale Price wrote thus (CLAYDEN, *Rogers and His Contemporaries*,

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i. 397-8) to Rogers, from Foxley, under date of ^{Lady} 26th December 1824:—^{Oxford.}

‘This is a melancholy subject’—[the death, by consumption, of Lord Aberdeen’s children]—and ‘I must go to another: poor Lady Oxford. I had heard with great concern of her dangerous illness, but hoped she might get through it, and was much, very much grieved to hear that it had ended fatally. I had, as you know, lived a great deal with her from the time she came into this country, immediately after her marriage, but for some years past, since she went abroad, had scarcely had any correspondence or intercourse with her, till I met her in town last spring. I then saw her twice, and both times she seemed so overjoyed to see an old friend, and expressed her joy so naturally and cordially, that I felt no less overjoyed at seeing her after so long an absence. She talked, with great satisfaction, of our meeting for a longer time this next spring, little thinking of an eternal separation. There could not, in all respects, be a more ill-matched pair than herself and Lord Oxford, or a stronger instance of the cruel sports of Venus, or, rather, of Hymen:—

Cui placet impares
Formas atque animos sub juga ahenea
Sævo mittere cum joco.

It has been said that she was, in some measure, forced into the match; had she been united to a man whom she had loved, esteemed, and respected, she herself might have been generally respected and esteemed as well as loved; but in her situation, to keep clear of all misconduct required a strong mind or a cold heart; perhaps both, and she had neither. Her failings were in no small degree the effect of circumstances; her amiable qualities all her own. There was something about her in spite of her errors remarkably attaching, and that something was not merely her beauty; “kindness has resistless charms,” and she was full of affectionate kindness to those she loved, whether as friends or as lovers. As a friend, I always found her the same; never at all changeful

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Lady or capricious ; as I am not a very rigid moralist and am
Oxford. extremely open to kindness, " I could have better spared
a better woman." "

Leigh
Hunt.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT (1784-1859) was imprisoned in Horsemonger Lane Gaol for that famous description (*Examiner*, 12th March 1813) of the Prince Regent as 'a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demi-reps,' and 'a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity.'

Hunt was a Radical, of course, and Moore a Whig ; but to abuse the Regent was to go straight to the heart of the great Whig Party, among whose members, says Moore, 'there existed . . . at this period a strong feeling of indignation at the late defection from themselves and their principles of the illustrious personage who had been so long looked up to as the friend and patron of both.' As a good and loyal Whig, Moore himself was 'warmly—perhaps intemperately—under the influence of this feeling' ; he 'regarded the fate of Mr. Hunt with more than common interest' ; so, 'immediately on my arrival in town (I) paid him a visit in his prison.' Byron heard of the experience and of the prisoner's circumstances—'his trelliced flower-garden without, and his books, busts, pictures, and pianoforte within' ; and being, he also, of the Whig way of thinking, requested an introduction. The visit was repeated, there was a

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dinner, there were presents of books ; and, 'It strikes me,' Hunt wrote to his wife, with a truly amazing capacity for self-deception, 'that he and I shall become friends, literally and cordially speaking. There is something in the texture of his mind that seems to resemble mine to a thread ; I think we are cut out of the same piece, only a different wear may have altered our respective naps a little.' Byron, on his part, thought the captive 'an extraordinary character. . . . Much talent, great independence of spirit, and an austere yet not repulsive aspect,' at the same time that he was 'the bigot of virtue (not *religion*), and, perhaps, a trifle opinionated. . . . But withal, a valuable man, and less vain than success, and even the consciousness of preferring the right to the expedient, might excuse.' The 'respective naps' are different, to be sure ; but for some time the relations between the wearers were friendly enough. It was to Byron that Hunt dedicated that achievement in affected English and shabby-genteel heroics in which, by an immortal piece of bathos, Dante's lovers, at the very crisis of their fate, are turned into a suburban milliner and her 'young man':—

'May I come in?' said he ;—it made her start,—
That *smiling* (!) voice—she coloured, pressed her heart
A moment, as for breath, and then with free
And usual tones said, 'Oh yes, certainly (!)':—

and Byron, though he despised the style, yet thought the poem 'a devilish good one,' recommended it to Murray, and would have liked Moore to give it a hand in *The Edinburgh Review*. Again, Hunt says that he was much with Byron in

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Leigh Hunt. the pre-Exile days, and when the Exile came, he broke forth in valediction and in song:—

And so adieu, dear Byron,—dear to me
For many a cause, disinterestedly, etc.

But by 1818 Byron's mood had grown truly critical, not to say truculent:—

‘He (Hunt) is a good man, with some poetical elements in his chaos, but spoiled by the Christ-Church Hospital and a Sunday newspaper,—to say nothing of the Surrey gaol, which conceited him into a martyr. But he is a good man. . . . He believes his trash of vulgar phrases, tortured into compound barbarisms, to be *old English*. . . . He sent out his *Foliage* by Percy Shelley . . . and of all the ineffable Centaurs that was ever begotten by Self-Love upon a Nightmare, I think this monstrous Sagittary the most prodigious. He (Leigh H.) is an honest charlatan, who has persuaded himself into a belief in his own impostures, and talks Punch in pure simplicity of heart. . . . Is that * * * at the head of *your* profession in *your* eyes? I'll be cursed if he is of *mine*, or ever shall be. . . . But Leigh Hunt is a good man; and a good father—see his Odes to all the Masters Hunt; a good husband—see his Sonnet to Mrs. Hunt; a good friend—see his Epistles to different people; and a great coxcomb, and a very vulgar person in everything about him.’

It is delightfully savage. But listen to Keats (4th Jan. 1819), who knew his Hunt like a book:—
‘In reality he is vain, egotistical, and disgusting in taste and morals. . . . He does one harm by making fine things petty, and beautiful things hateful.’ By contrast this character of Byron's conveys the impression that the writer must have had a real regard for Hunt, however dashed with scorn, to have countenanced the famous tour to Italy at all.

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That tour was made at Shelley's suggestion, and on funds (£200) which Shelley borrowed from Byron for the purpose. In the sequel it proved the worst day's work he ever did. Its objects were (1) rest and change for Hunt, and (2) the foundation of a magazine to be written by Hunt, Shelley, and Byron. It is absurd to suppose that such a venture could have prospered; but, as matter of fact, no such venture was ever made. Hunt (with his wife and six children) was bound for Pisa, where Shelley (then at Lerici) had furnished the ground-floor of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, Byron's house, for him. At Leghorn he was joined by Shelley and Williams in the *Don Juan*. The party went on to Pisa, whither Byron followed; and, a few days after, the *Don Juan*—'built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark'—put out to sea for the last time. The impossible combination disappeared; and Byron was left with Hunt (*cum suis*) on his hands, and the strong conviction in his mind that the whole position was a mistake. In effect, the results were disastrous all round. The host, to his discredit, was at no particular pains to make himself agreeable to his guest; the guest, who was at best a journalist of parts, but thought himself by far the better poet of the two—he was very soon to show, and in *The Liberal* too, how Byron ought to write the *ottava rima*!—was not greatly concerned to conciliate his host, at the same time that he looked to that host to give lavishly and ask no questions. In this, however, the guest was disappointed. More: he had been all his life a sponge, and for the first time in his life (as Mr. Monkhouse has remarked in his excel-

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Hunt.

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lent little monograph) he was made to feel like the sponge he was. He had, as Keats says, taken Haydon's 'silver,' and 'expostulated on the indelicacy' of a demand for its return; and in less trying times he had had £1400 out of Shelley in a single year. Byron was not that stamp of treasurer. He was better versed in character and life than Shelley; and, whether or not he had contracted what he calls the 'good old-gentlemanly vice,' it is certain that Hunt, though he accepted some £500 of him, and lived 'for the best part of two years' at his expense, was neither satisfied nor pleased. Thus the pike which tries to swallow what appears to him his natural prey, but has to give over the experience, 'distracted and amazed.' The starting of *The Liberal* made matters worse. It was founded with Byron's money, and fed with such Byronisms as *Heaven and Hell*, the *Vision*, the translation from Pulci, and the letter to 'My dear Roberts.' But it was a failure from the beginning, when John Hunt was fined and imprisoned for publishing the *Vision*; and as, though it was little or nothing to Byron, it was bread of life, and more, to Hunt, nobody need be surprised, though everybody should be distressed, to find that Hunt was presently disposed—(I quote again his able and humane apologist)—to 'impute the meanest motives to everything Byron said or did.' If you lie down with dogs (in fact), you get up with fleas. Byron consorted with Hunt, and four years after Byron's death (1828) Hunt published his *Lord Byron and His Contemporaries*. He wrote this stuff because he wanted money, and he would not

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have written it (so he says) could he have got money ^{Leigh} by any other means ; and, with a littleness of mind ^{Hunt.} and spirit unparalleled in any but a cast mistress or an embittered poetaster, he essayed to present the man on whom he had sponged 'for the best part of two years' as a cad of the first magnitude—as, in fact, as false, as selfish, as contemptible a human thing as had disgraced the century.

But by the time that this ignoble piece of book-making got into print, the British public had awakened to a sense of what it had lost in Byron—to a sense, too, of its own superb stupidity in Byron's case ; and, as Mr. Monkhouse says, its reception of Hunt's 'libel probably caused him more suffering than all the former attacks of the *Quarterly*'—(in which Lockhart described the thing as 'the miserable book of a miserable man')—'Blackwood, and other enemies put together.' The most galling, I think, because the most contemptuous, diatribe of all came from his ex-friend, Moore. I shall quote it here in full, not from the *Satirical and Humorous Poems* (where it is signed 'T. Pidcock,' and dated from 'Exeter Change,' where the menagerie was), but from a copy, in the Morrison Autographs, in the handwriting of Augusta Leigh:—

THE 'LIVING DOG' AND THE 'DEAD LION'

THOMAS MOORE TO LEIGH HUNT

Jan. 13.

Next week will be published, as 'Lives' are the rage,
The whole Reminiscences, wondrous and strange,
Of a small puppy dog, that lived once in the Cage
Of the late noble Lion at Exeter Change.

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Hunt, Though the dog is a dog of the kind they call 'sad,'
 'Tis a puppy that much to good breeding pretends ;
And few Dogs have such opportunities had,
 Of knowing how lions behave among friends.

How the Animal eats, how he snores, how he drinks,
Is all noted down by this Boswell so small,
And 'tis plain from each sentence the puppy dog thinks
That the Lion was no such great things after all.

Though he roar'd pretty well—this the puppy allows—
It was all, he says, borrow'd—all second-hand roar,
And he vastly prefers his own little bow-wows
[To] the loftiest War-note the Lion could pour.

'Tis indeed as good fun as a Cynic could ask,
To see how this cockney-bred setter of rabbits
Takes gravely the head of the Forest to task
And judges of Lions by Puppy Dog habits.

Nay, fed as he was (and this makes [it] a dark case)
With sops every day from the Lion's own pan,
He lifts up his leg at the noble beast's carcase,
And does all a Dog, so diminutive, can.

However, the Book 's a good book—being rich in
Examples and warnings to Lions high-bred,
How they suffer small mongrelly curs in their kitchen,
Who 'll feed on them living, and foul them when dead.

Thus Moore, and, broadly speaking, thus the
general press. An ordinary person—if one can
imagine an ordinary person in such circumstances—
would have imitated Captain Shandy's (proposed)
method of dealing with that work which the great
Lepsius composed the day he was born. But Hunt
was a spirited creature in his way ; and, howbeit
something saddened and surprised (above all sur-
prised) by the terms of his reception, he at once
proceeded to give proof positive that, as he told his

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readers, he had 'moral courage, and a great deal of it.' In Sir Walter's phrase (LANG, *Lockhart*, ii. 23), he had already 'behaved like a hyæna to Byron,' for that he had 'dug him up to girn and howl over him in the same breath'; and in a second edition he showed that he could do still worse. For in certain Appendices, while protesting that 'no man could hold in greater horror' than he did 'the violation of the *sub iisdem trabibus*—the sacred enclosure of private walls,' he essayed to justify himself on this head; and in his Preface, retorting on a reference (LOCKHART) to his 'not very tractable children,' he ventured to 'thank God they were not tractable to' Byron, and to add this:—'I have something very awful to say on this subject in case it is forced from me.' He said not how nor when this 'something very awful' was discovered to him; and in common charity one must infer that it was neither when he was living under Byron's roof nor when he was taking Byron's money as an outdoor pensioner.

'I have many infirmities,' he wrote, 'and nothing great in me but my sympathy with mankind.' The infirmities are patent; but for the 'sympathy,' etc., one must go else-whither than to *Lord Byron and His Contemporaries*. It is fair to add that Hunt wrote with true piety of Shelley—(but if, as Trelawny says, he really did prefer his own Muse before Shelley's, the density of his conceit is not to be expressed in terms of words)—and Keats; that he lived to a green old age; that he numbered Carlyle among his many friends; and that another of them, Charles Dickens, was severely taken to

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Leigh Hunt. task for presenting him as the Harold Skimpole of *Bleak House*. A person of parts, no doubt—of parts, and a certain charm, and a facile, amiable, liquorish temperament. But there was no clearer, keener vision than Keats's ; and I fear that Keats's word about Leigh Hunt must be remembered as the last.

Charles Morris. CAPTAIN CHARLES MORRIS (1745-1838), author of innumerable moral songs (*Lyra Urbanica*, 1840), but remembered chiefly for *Jenny Sutton* and *The Great Plenipotentiary* (both still prized among amateurs of the *genre*), and a single line in *The Contrast* :—

‘ O, give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall.’

Being a Whig bard and satirist (he was responsible for such pasquinades as *Billy's Too Young to Drive Us*) he incensed the Anti-Jacobins, who introduced him with peculiar opprobrium, in a sham account of the celebration of Fox's birthday. Thus runs that part of the report (compiled, 'tis said, from the *Morning Post* and *Morning Chronicle* : ‘ the *Courier* being too stupid for our purpose’) which concerns him :—

‘ We know not how far Mr. Fox might have proceeded, had he not been interrupted by a jangling of bells from the Side-table which immediately drew all eyes that way. This proceeded from Captain Morris, who had fallen asleep during Mr. Fox's Song, and was now nodding on his chair, with a large paper Cap on his head, ornamented with gilt tassels and bells, which one of the Company had dexterously whipped on unperceived. The first motion was that of indignation ; but the stupid stare of the unconscious

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Captain, who half opened his eyes at every sound of the Charles bells as his head rose or fell, and immediately closed them again, *somno vinoque gravatus*, had such a powerful effect on the risible faculties of the Company, that they broke, as if by consent, into the most violent and convulsive fits of laughter; Mr. Fox himself not being exempt from the general contagion. As soon as the Captain was made sensible of the cause of this uproar, he attempted to pull off the Cap, but was prevented by a Citizen from the *Corresponding Society*, who maintained that the Company had a right to be amused by the Captain in what manner they pleased; and that, as he seemed to amuse them more effectually in *that state* than in any other, he insisted, for one, on his continuing to wear the Cap. This was universally agreed to, with the exception of the Duke of Norfolk. The Captain was therefore led to the upper table, with all his "jangling honours loud upon him"! Here, as soon as he was seated, his Noble Friend called upon him for a Song. The Captain sang the *Plenipo* in his best manner. This was received with great applause; and then the Duke gave "The Defenders—of Ireland"—(*three times three*). Captain Morris then began:—

"And all the Books of Moses":—

but was interrupted, before he had finished the first line, by Mr. Tierney, who declared he would not sit there and hear anything like ridicule on the Bible.—(*Much coughing and scraping.*)—Mr. Erskine took God to witness, that he thought the Captain meant no harm;—and a gentleman from Cambridge, whose name we could not learn, said, with great *naïveté*, that it was no more than was done every day by his acquaintance. Mr. Tierney, however, persisted in his opposition to the Song, and Captain Morris was obliged to substitute *Fenny Sutton* in the place of it. But the good humour of the company was already broken in upon, and Mr. Tierney soon after left the room (to which he did not return) with greater marks of displeasure in his face than we ever remember to have seen there.'

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Charles
Morris.

Thus, too, Kirkpatrick Sharpe—Sir Walter's friend :
withal ' the unclean bird, which buildeth its nest in
the corner of the temple, and defileth the holy
places,' of the *Chaldee Manuscript*—in that *Vision
of Liberty* which he contributed to *The Anti-
Jacobin Review and Magazine* :—

' On a cock sparrow fed with Spanish flies,
A swilling Captain came, with liquor mellow,
And still the crowd in hideous uproar cries,
" Sing us a b—dy song, thou d—d good fellow."
Incontinent he sets himself to bellow,
And shouts with all the strength that in him lies ;
The Citizens exclaim, " He's sans pareilly O " ;
The Citizens in raptures roll their eyes,
And drink with leathern ears the fool's lewd ribal-
dries.'

(Both quotations are from Mr. Edmonds's Edition
of *The Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin* ; London,
1890.) The captain was for many years a parasite
of that violent Whig, the Duke of Norfolk, who left
him nothing in the end. He had, however, an
annuity of £200 from the Regent, and, for all his
reputation, is described by Moore as ' a very grave,
steady person ' (this is confirmed by the odd anony-
mous *Memoirs of a Man of Fashion* ; London,
1821). For a pretty story of Morris and Lord
Stowell and their old sweetheart, Molly Dacre (then
Lady Clarke), see MOORE (*Diary*, 19th November
1829), who is also responsible for the story that the
captain's widow expected £10,000 of Murray for
the MS. afterwards published as *Lyra Urbanica*.

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OUR next round of toasts was a fancy quite new,
For we drank—and you 'll own 'twas benevolent too—
To those well-meaning husbands, cits, parsons, or peers,
Whom we 've, any time, honoured by courting their dears.
This museum of wittols was comical rather ;
Old H—df—rt gave M—ss—y, and I gave your f—th—r.

Marquess
of
Hertford.

Thus an 'Intercepted Letter' from 'G—ge, Pr—ce
R—g—nt, to the E—rl of Y—rm—th' ; and
as matter of fact the second Marchioness of
Hertford—(Isabella Anne Ingram Sheppard (*d.*
1834), daughter and co-heir of Charles, Viscount
Irwin, of Scotland)—who had at this time 'reached
the regulation age,' and was,

(As near as one can fix
From peerage dates) full fifty-six,

was all-powerful with the Regent, and was justly
execrated of the Whigs. They suspected her of
alienating their sometime Patron's affections from
them, and of dictating that course of policy, one
effect—and not the worst—of which was their
absolute exclusion from Place ; and they applauded
with both hands not only such capital chaff as the
Horace : *Ode* xi. *Book* ii. ('Freely Translated by
the Pr—ce R—g—nt') :—

Go—bid her haste hither,
And let her bring with her
The latest No-Popery Sermon that 's going—
Oh ! let her come with her dark tresses flowing,
All gentle and juvenile, curly and gay,
In the manner of—Ackermann's *Dresses for May* :—

but also such ruffianism as the lines first quoted,
and the well-nigh unpresentable anacreontic, *To a
Plumassier* :—

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of
Hertford.

Seek me out a fine Pea-hen ;
Such a Hen, so tall and grand,
As by Juno's side might stand,
If there were no cocks at hand.
Seek her feathers, soft as down, etc.

Her son, FRANCIS CHARLES SEYMOUR CONWAY, Earl of Yarmouth (1777-1842) and Third Marquess of Hertford (1822), was fifteen years the Prince's junior. Familiarly known as 'Red Her-rings,' by reason partly of his title and partly of the fiery hue of his whiskers :—

Thy whiskers, too, Yarmouth—alas ! even they,
Tho' so rosy they burn,
Too quickly must turn
(What a heart-breaking change for thy whiskers !)
to *Grey* :—

he was one of the most conspicuous, as well as one of the most characteristic, figures of the later Georgian Age. Educated at Eton and Oxford (Christ Church and St. Mary's Hall : he proceeded to his M.A. degree as late as 1814), in 1798 he married Maria Fagniani, old Q's (or George Selwyn's : he left her £30,000) natural daughter, and entered the Commons as member for Orford (Suffolk). In 1802-3, after the Peace of Amiens, he took his wife to Paris, and was presently captured with the rest of his countrymen in France, and sent to Verdun : a special exception being made for his Countess, who remained in the capital. [In 1842 *The Times* (12th March) quotes *The Scotsman* to this effect :—'The wife of the deceased Marquis was the acknowledged mistress of Marshal Junot.' Hence, perhaps, the epithet in Moore's pasquinade :

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—‘His Y—rm—th’s own *Frenchified* hand cut it out.’ Be this as it may, it was at Paris that was born her second son, the Lord Henry Seymour (1805-1859), who was afterwards to found the French Jockey Club, and of whom it is reported that neither could he speak English, nor had he ever set foot on English ground.] When the Whigs came in (1806), the Prince requested Fox, who was in *private* correspondence with Talleyrand, to negotiate Yarmouth’s release ; and the Emperor, believing him to be a personal friend of Fox’s, let him out at once, and packed him off to England to arrange terms of peace. He reached London on 4th June, and was sent back as Envoy-Extraordinary ; but in the interval there had been *pour-parlers* with Russia, Napoleon had raised his terms, and Yarmouth was dished. His mission remained a secret till August, when he was joined by Lord Lauderdale, who took up the negotiations in his stead ; but neither Lauderdale (with Yarmouth) for England nor d’Oubril for Russia was clever enough to play bowls with Napoleon, and in the sequel they went home baffled and shamed. (All this on the word of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, May 1842.) In 1809 Yarmouth seconded his cousin Castlereagh in the duel with Canning ; in 1810 he succeeded to ‘the greatest part of the disposable property of the rich and eccentric Duke of Queensberry, the putative father of his wife’—to £150,000, that is, besides real estate ; in 1811 he was made Vice-Chamberlain ; in 1812 he was appointed Lord Warden of the Stanneries and a member of the Privy Council, and (with his mother) was preferred

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by the Regent before Lords Grey and Grenville, who declined to join the New Cabinet unless the Hertfords (the Second Marquess (1743-1822) was Lord High Chamberlain) and their son were removed from the Household ; in 1814 he helped to found the Pugilistic Club, and was told off to do the honours to the Emperor Alexander, who gave him the Order of St. Anne ; in 1822 he succeeded to the Marquisate, and received the Garter ; and in 1827, being sent, as Ambassador-Extraordinary, to invest the Czar Nicholas with the Garter at Tsarkoeseloe, he played his part with a magnificence which set the Court and City gaping. After the passing of the Reform Bill he 'took a dislike' to England, and chiefly lived abroad until his death, which made him still more notorious (if that were possible) than he had been in life. His will, indeed, was made the occasion for years of scandalous litigation. It disposed of a vast amount of property ; it dealt largely with scamps and demi-reps ; and it was so violently phrased that *The Times* declined to quote a number of its instructions. It is far too elaborate and long to analyse, much less to print in full ; and the executors, who had their work cut out for them in any case, were moved, unwisely, to boggle at certain of its provisions. Hence an action by one Angélique Borel, who recovered £3000 ; hence, too, an action by Lord Hertford's valet, Nicholas Suisse, who recovered more thousands than I care to say ; and hence the criminal prosecution of Suisse—first in London and then in Paris—on a charge of embezzling divers sums of money, amounting (on one

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count only) to as much as 100,000 francs. For the legitimate effect of the will, it remains obscure. But, so far as I can learn, a codicil (one of thirty) revoked a large bequest to the mother of Lord Hertford's three wards, because she had formed a connexion which was displeasing to him ; but those wards, the daughters of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan (scandal gave them another sire):—

Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham :—

Countess Zichy (who lived with him until the end), Countess Barthold, and Princess Ruffo got £86,000, £80,000, and £40,000, respectively. Also 'Lady Strachan's maid' took £5000 down and a life annuity of £1000 ; the servants £16,000 to £20,000 among them ; John Wilson Croker (whose relations with the Marquess are suggested in Thackeray's Mr. Wenham and, especially, Disraeli's Mr. Rigby), £21,000 and the wine (the best of it was abroad, so he made not much by this part of the bequest) ; the executors £5000 apiece ; and so on, and so on. Altogether an amazing document. 'Aware of the infamy of the character of one' of a pair of legatees, the testator 'wishes the other to be as little in the power of that person as possible, and regulates certain payments in order that the one person may have no occasion to shorten the life of the other.' This provision *The Times* made bold to reproduce. We may judge of those it let alone.

Besides being Lord Warden of the Stanneries, Lord Hertford was Steward and Vice-Admiral of

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the Duchy of Cornwall, Chief Commissioner of the Duchy of Cornwall, Recorder of Coventry and Bodmin, Custos Rotulorum of the County of Antrim, Vice-Admiral of the Coast of Suffolk, etc. etc. Also, as the 'patron' of Aldeburgh, Bodmin, Orford, and Lisburne, he nominated eight Members of Parliament. Indeed, his chief claims to distinction are that he so lived his life as to make it as it were a sublimation of the life and spirit of his time, and was as high, as puissant, and as magnificent a being as that time could show. In this capacity he touched the imagination of two men of genius, and he exists in literature as the Monmouth of *Coningsby* and the Steyne of *Vanity Fair*. Both are masterpieces, and the one completes the other ; for Lord Monmouth produces the impression not merely of the dissolute grandee, but also of the Great Noble who is naturally and easily in the front of politics and society, has the sense of affairs, can be a statesman when he will, and on occasion can do the honours for his country as becomes the best among English gentlemen ; while Lord Steyne, with his decoration of red hair and gleaming tusks, his leg and his *grand air* and his Garter, his effect in theatres and drawing-rooms, and his general potency in intrigue, remains a perfect exemplar of the debauched patrician, the person of birth and wealth and breeding who is above all an *homme à femmes*. And on the whole, Lord Hertford was ever rather Steyne than Monmouth to the general. I seem to remember him figuring thus, 'for all he's worth,' in that blackguard thing, *The Mysteries of the Court* ; he appears (as, for that matter, who does not?),

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though to no great purpose, in the *Memoirs* of ^{Marquess} Harriette Wilson; and there is a little book, *The Confessions of Nicholas Suisse, Late Valet to the Marquis of Hertford* (Jackson and Co., 134 New Bond Street, 1842), which I would quote, if I dared, in illustration of the repute in which he was held, and of the terms in which men spoke and thought of him. [In reading Suisse, by the way, one cannot choose but think of a certain Monsieur Fiche—('Since Monseigneur's death he has returned to his native country, where he lives much respected, and has purchased from his prince the title of Baron Ficci')—and his desperate confidences to Mrs. Rawdon Crawley on the Pincian Hill.] In any case, he was a sterling Georgian type, a man of Byron's *monde*, a representative of the age whose mouthpiece Byron was; and that must serve as my excuse for this Note.

A last touch or two. Lord Yarmouth, being robbed of certain jewels, informed the authorities that he kept them 'in his rouge-box.' Also, he is said to have kicked and caned his master for misbehaviour to a lady. The story is told in Suisse's *Confessions*, and in a lampoon of the period, *R—y—l Stripes, or a Kick from Y—rm—th to Wa—s*, etc. 'A Poem, by P—— P——, Poet Laureat (London, E. Wilson, 1812):—

Lord Y——h's blood began to freeze,
To see P——e G——e upon his knees,
Yet guess'd the meaning of his motions :
And thinking this no time for speech,
Gave him a kick across the breech,
Which marr'd his H——ss's devotions. . . .

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Loud roar'd the P——e, but roar'd in vain,
L——d Y——h brandish'd high his cane,
And guided every r—y—l movement ;
Now up, now down, now to, and fro
The R——t nimbly moved his toe,
The lady much enjoy'd the show,
And complimented his *improvement*. . . .

Soft pity touch'd the tender fair,
She heard his accents of despair,
His piteous sighs, his deep repentance ;
And begg'd Lord Y——h to refrain,
And give some respite to his cane,
And mitigate the r—y—l sentence.

The Peer obey'd—the nymph admir'd—
No more he laid his stick upon him ;
And Britain's blubb'ring P——e retir'd,
With *blushing honours* thick upon him, etc.

‘PIPPIN’

ON September 23, 1814, the amiable and lovely Annabella M—— communicated to her dearest Emily an ‘event that affords me the best prospect of happiness,’ in the following terms:—‘I am engaged to marry Lord B——. Convinced by intimate knowledge and the deepest investigation that he merits my highest esteem, whilst he possesses my strongest affection, I feel myself honoured in the choice ; and I expect, of your candour and kindness, that you will rely more on the opinion which we have had *reason* to form, than on the vague prejudices of the world.’ On October 1st, writing to Colonel D—— : ‘After an intimate, and not merely a recent knowledge,’ Miss Annabella says, ‘of his (Lord B——’s) character, with the best opportunities of judging his heart and dispositions, I have yielded to his sincere and constant attachment, convinced that he is fully deserving of mine, and hoping to be successful in my endeavours to make him happy. I have reason to believe that we understand one another particularly well, and though I do not pretend to equal, I may be capable of appreciating his merits.’ A few days after, in answer, apparently, to her dearest E., ‘It is not,’ the

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young thing says—‘It is not in the great world that Lord B——’s true character must be sought. But ask of those nearest to him—of the unhappy whom he has consoled, of the poor whom he has blessed, of the dependants to whom he is the best of masters. . . . I cannot reproach myself for having resisted my own wishes as well as his, until *thoroughly* convinced that their fulfilment would produce mutual happiness. . . . I have a calm and deep security—a confidence in God and man.’ Her friends and relations, she goes on to say, ‘concur in thinking my views of happiness as fair as *this* world can promise ; but in the dearest wishes I always look beyond temporary hopes.’ Thus the fair, the accomplished, the unexceptionable Annabella M——. And in some eighteen months from the date of her expressing these most beautiful sentiments, her ideal husband, overwhelmed with charges whose nature none has ever known, deserted a few days after the birth of the only child his wife was ever to bear him, was fleeing his country, a broken and dishonoured man. There is nothing like it in history, nor—so far as I know—in fiction neither!

For these passages are not excerpted from a hitherto unpublished work by the creator of the anxious Miss Harlowe, the high-souled Harriet, the noble and exemplary Sir Charles Grandison. Miss Austen had no hand in them, nor had Miss Burney. They were written by the Miss Milbanke, who three months after the writing (January 2, 1815) became Lady Byron, and they convey in terms sufficiently clear and exact her opinion of an engage-

‘PIPPIN’

ment which had been some years in the making. Apparently the Milbankes were pleased all round. ‘My daughter,’ Lady Milbanke writes (October 4, 1814), ‘is engaged to marry Lord Byron, *with the entire approbation of her father and myself*, to which is added my brother’s kindest sanction. *You*, who, like Lord Byron, are favoured by the Muses’—(the lady’s correspondent was the ineffable Sir James Bland Burgess of Porson’s epigram :—

‘Poetis nos lætamur tribus,
Pye, Petro Pindar, parvo Pybus :
Si ulterius ire pergis,
Adde his Sir James Bland Burgis’) :—

‘no doubt admire him as a *poet* : but, believe me, he has, like yourself, a warm, affectionate, and liberal heart, with many qualities which promise happiness to the woman who will be his wife ; his attachment to *her* has been *constant* and is *deep* founded on the best basis : that of *esteem*. . . . Annabella, I must confess, returns his attachment very sincerely.’ Why not? Byron’s love-letters (a meagre selection is printed by Mr. Prothero) are excellent in manner and tone and kind. When he wrote them, he was far and away the most brilliant and conspicuous figure in English letters ; he had lived and loved and suffered ; he was the poet of *Harold* i.-ii., the *Giaour*, the *Bride*, the *Corsair*, *Lara*, to say nothing of *English Bards* ; his success among women was notorious ; his beauty and wit and *prestance*, his dandyism, his violent anti-Toryism, had done almost as much for his reputation as his poetry itself. Yet he writes to the little country blue-stocking, which was Miss Milbanke,

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in a strain of what I cannot but call affectionate humility, which would have gone home to the heart of (let us say) the ingenuous Mr. Thackeray. Indeed, knowing what I know of Thackeray, and reading what Lord Lovelace has transcribed from Byron, I can all-but figure the one great writer's account of the other. Byron is tired of ropery, dead-tired. *Das Lied ist aus*. He wants to make an end. His friends' wives have (as he somewhere says) done him no good. He wants a wife of his own. He has always believed that Miss Milbanke was the sole and only person ; and, when he finds that at last—after refusing him—she owns that she 'reciprocates,' he is sorry for his past, he wishes he were better and worthier, he is moved to write in a strain that, as I have said, would certainly have agitated Thackeray's waistcoat. 'Tears,' he might have written, 'fill the honest fellow's eyes, as he thinks of his own unworthiness, and of the sweetness, the guileless innocence, the sacred purity,' etc. etc. And it would all have been true. I grant that Byron was a rake ; but I wish to point out that no man can be a rake unless the other sex is art and part with him in the matter of his offence. More : I am credibly informed that raking is on the whole a tedious business, and that there comes a moment in the life of every practitioner of the art when reform and a 'pure woman' (which is conventional English for a home and a child or two) present themselves as the best in life. Well : Byron had reached that point ; he had reached it partly by thinking of Miss Milbanke ; he was convinced that all he needed was a chance, and that Miss Milbanke

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was the girl to give him that chance. So he wrote to her,—and such letters of his as we are privileged to see do him much honour. And she wrote to him—but we cannot say what her letters to him were like, for the simple reason that Mr. Prothero has none to show. In the end they were married, by special licence; a year and a fortnight after the wedding, Lady Byron left her husband never to return to him; and the great heart of the Public rose to the occasion. A Bride repudiating her Groom! A young mother fleeing the embrace of her firstborn’s father! Obviously he was the guilty party. Obviously she—young, innocent, high-principled, above all virtuous—was the victim. By specifying nothing, and so suggesting the unspeakable, she captured the general imagination, and set it working to her sole advantage. ‘He is completely lost in the opinion of the world,’ and ‘I look upon him as given up to every worthless excess for the rest of his life’ :—thus Miss Godfrey to her friend, Thomas Moore; and, condemning on hearsay and in advance, the poor soul did but follow her Ladyship’s suggested lead. There were so many of her way of feeling and thinking that an actress¹ could not take a turn in the country with her ‘fancy man,’ but it was thought that she had gone away with Byron, and on her reappearance she was hissed

¹ Mrs. Mardyn, to wit. She went off with a lad of eighteen, a son of Downton the actor. Old Downton wanted to protest, but Byron peremptorily declined to recognise so contemptible a scandal. One Cruikshank etching, printed for public consumption, showed Mrs. Mardyn and two other ladies setting sail with Byron, while sailors jibe, and from the sea-banks her Ladyship, with Ada in her arms, considers the event. Another associated Byron with the Devil and a distant gallows.

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from the boards! It was a victory for the Virtuous Woman all along the line. As ever, she was a crown to her husband, but this time it was a crown of thorns. She had but to refrain from speaking, indeed, and one of the strongest, bravest spirits of our century was expelled his country. And none knew why she did it, nor how. And why she did it remains a mystery even till this day. But how she did it Mr. Prothero is able to let us see.

They were married,¹ as I said, on January 2, 1815—at Seaham, Durham; and they went to spend the honeymoon in Yorkshire. Returning to Seaham, they seem to have made the best of things, both for themselves and for their parents. ‘Lady B. writes me word’ (thus Augusta Leigh to Hodgson) ‘she never saw her father and mother so happy; that she believes the latter would go to the bottom of the sea herself to find fish for B.’s dinner; that he (B.) owns at last that he is very happy and comfortable at Seaham, though he had *predetermined* to be miserable.’ ’Tis true, his health is ‘not very good,’ but ‘he seldom complains’; and ‘both that and his spirits have been improved by some daily walks she had prevailed on him to take.’ Also, she ‘attributes much of his languor in ye morning and *feverish feels* at night to his long fasts, succeeded by too hearty meals for any one,’ etc. Further, ‘they had been playing the fool one evening, “old and

¹ Writing in October 1814, Hodgson, afterwards Provost of Eton, describes a meeting with Byron at Cambridge; and, after telling of Byron on Miss Milbanke, and Byron on Miss Milbanke’s money, and Byron’s settlements on Miss Milbanke, ‘Where, where,’ he asks, ‘are the hearts of those who can undervalue, who can depreciate, this man?’

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young.” B. dressed in Lady M.’s long-haired *wig* (snatched from her head for the purpose), his dressing-gown on turned wrong side out,’ and ‘Lady B. in his travelling-cap and long cloak with whiskers and mustachios.’ A dreadful picture, truly! Indeed, since ‘the most capricious poet, honest Ovid,’ breathed out his soul among the Goths, there has been none like it. Harold snatching wigs! The Giaour in a dressing-gown the wrong side out! Tennyson (or Browning) buffooning in somebody else’s head of hair! Mr. Arnold (or Tennyson) in——But no! An ounce of civet, good apothecary! Such fancies are impossible. To attempt them is merely to see how very far we are removed from a romping, bibulous Regency. All the same, the story was worth the telling; if only because it shows that the young couple (by this time she was Pippin to him and he to her was Duck) were on the best and silliest of good terms. The inference that both bride and groom were all they ought to be at such a date is confirmed by Duck himself. In a letter to Moore (March 2, 1814) he is a little inclined to play the banished dandy; and, in effect, the differences between ‘Father-in-law Sir Jacob’ (as, with his absurd resolve to read Foote’s farce into his life, he takes care to call Sir Ralph Milbanke) must certainly have been a little trying to the boon companion of Sheridan and Colman. But he isn’t at all malignant—(indeed, the letters in this admirable third volume of Mr. Prothero’s give you the impression that he was one of the best good-natured men that ever lived)—and in the end he takes leave of his experi-

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ence in pleasant enough terms. 'I have been very comfortable here,' he writes to Moore (March 8, 1815), 'listening to that damned monologue, which elderly gentlemen call conversation, and in which my pious father-in-law repeats himself every evening—save one, when he played upon the fiddle. However, they have been very kind and hospitable, and I like them and the place vastly, and I hope they will live many happy months.' As for his wife: 'Bell is *in health and unvaried good-humour and behaviour*'¹ (the italics are mine). That is the last of Seaham. Next day the couple left for Newmarket (Colonel Leigh's) and London. And on March 18th Mrs. Leigh, henceforth to be Goose to the Duck and Pippin of the other two, tells Hodgson that she thinks she 'never saw nor heard of a more perfect being' than Her Ladyship 'appears to be'; while, as for My Lord, who is 'looking particularly well,' he 'seems quite sensible of her value,' and 'as happy as the present alarming state of *public* and the tormenting uncertainties of his own private affairs will admit of.' Then come 13 Piccadilly Terrace, and the beginning of the end. 'I am sorry to say,' writes Mrs. Leigh again to Hodgson, 'his nerves and spirits are very far from what I wish them. . . . I think the uncomfortable

¹ Contrast the facts of the marriage as set forth in Mr. Prothero's pages with the absconded Pippin's plea to Hodgson:—'All this it is in his disposition to revenge on the object *if in his power*. When his revenge avowedly began as soon as I became so by marriage, and seems to have increased in force rather than diminished, what would it be *now*? Those who consider his welfare, ought not to desire my return': lest (the inference is) the ruffian Duck be moved to twist poor Pippin's neck, and sacrifice his own! Cf., too, Her Ladyship's preposterous story to Lady Ann Lindsay.

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state of his affairs is the cause ; at least I can discern no other. He has every outward blessing,’ etc. He had, no doubt. Yet in a year or so the hapless Duck was outward bound—the Pilgrim of Eternity. And the hand that thrust this greatness on him was—Pippin’s.

The time in Piccadilly Terrace went both well and ill. Byron had no money and was up to his ears in debt ; he had failed to sell Newstead, and he could get nothing out of his Rochdale property ; he had married a fortune, and the Jews were continually at his haunches. We know not all that he was at home, but we have his own authority for saying that he was irritable and ‘humorous,’ that his habits were personal, that he brooded, and was ill-pleased with many things. All the same, both *Parisina* and *The Siege of Corinth* are the work of this year, and Pippin transcribes his MSS. for the printer ; and Duck will not suffer his Pippin—who is in delicate health—to go much into society. Abroad, he talks and works as a member of the Drury Lane Committee, and he talks and works so well that, when he leaves the theatre, not even an actor has quarrelled with him. Coleridge writes to him for help, is asked to write a tragedy, and—meanwhile—is strongly recommended to Murray ; Sotheby and Maturin ‘accost,’ and their plays get all the backing he can give ; Hogg and Hunt descend upon him, and he pleads their cause with Murray as it had been his own ; Mackintosh approaches him (through Rogers) for help for Godwin, and he at once remembers that Murray has offered him a thousand guineas for *Parisina* and *The Siege* (which he has

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refused), and is all eagerness to strike the bargain, that he may send £600 to Godwin, and divide the balance (£450) between Coleridge and Maturin.¹ Meanwhile, however, Pippin has made up her mind about him, and has begun to take measures to be rid of him. It is obvious to her—or so she says—that he is mad; and a little before or after her lying-in she has broached the matter to Augusta, and has persuaded that excellent creature that, *Parisina* notwithstanding, and despite the *Siege*, 'tis time the matter be most carefully considered. Then Ada Byron—'Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart'—is born (December 10, 1815); on January 8, 1816, Pippin has asked Dr. Baillie, 'as a friend,' to tell her whether Byron is or is not mad; a week after she leaves Piccadilly Terrace for Kirkby Mallory, her father's residence; next day, 'by medical advice,' she writes cheerfully and affectionately to her husband; and that is all. They never met again; and the next that Duck knew of Pippin was that she had taken his child from him, and purposed—strongly purposed—that he should never more set eyes on either of them. He never did. Byron the poet, Byron the dandy, Byron the *homme à femmes*, Byron the lover, Byron the husband and father—the little country blue-stockings were more than a match for them. Against them all she set her unaided wits, and against them all she scored; and scored so heavily that in France, and places where they know better, the name and fame of the

¹ It was Murray who prevented the transaction. Byron, in fact, was at this time so desperately driven for money, that he had to sell his books, etc., which Murray bought of him *en bloc* for £1500.

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British Female suffer for Pippin's achievement yet.

I do not mean to tell the story of her engineering. Enough to say that it was grandly contrived and excellently done : that, having conceived her design, she put it through point by point—not faltering once, nor turning once from her main purpose. She began by suggesting insanity, and by saying that, if she were right, she would be reconciled. But she knew quite well that she could not possibly prove insanity ; so she said at the outset that if she were wrong, then there could be no reconciliation, and that she must take steps to protect herself against the recurrence of—nobody knows what. Byron, sick to death (and who can blame him?) of such a monstrous experience,¹ most foolishly and quixotically declared that she might have her will, and be separated ; but his friends said no, and he presently said ditto to his friends ; and there were parleys and alarums and excursions. And Pippin stuck to her point so closely and so well that this might have been—not the first but—the fourteenth husband she desired to shed. And she shifted her ground continually ; and, so far as one can see, she lied to everybody taken in the welter ; much as she lied years afterwards to Lady Ann Lindsay, and years after that to poor old Beecher Stowe. And, at the last, when, in the face of all that her father had said and done in her behalf, it seemed to her advisers that reconciliation was both possible and desirable,

¹ What else to call it, in effect ? This husband was discharged, ‘ without a character,’ like a footman, after a year's trial ! And, to the extent of a first-born, and £60,000 in settlements, he had duly fulfilled his part of the bargain, too !

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she took the matter into her own hands, and went, alone, to Lushington, and told him—what? Nobody knows. Nobody but Lushington ever knew. Lushington died without telling it. She died without telling it. And we can get no further. Whatever it was, it made so great an impression on Lushington that, he said, he would have no hand in any attempt at smoothing over things. So, having challenged his adversary to come into court, and challenged her in vain, Byron signed the deed of separation, and departed on his pilgrimage. And with him went *Manfred* and *Harold* iii.-iv., and *Sardanapalus*, and *Cain*, and the *Vision*, and *Don Juan*—the one epic of modern life which has as yet got written. And he died at Missolonghi and was mourned by Walter Scott. And in the end it was found that he had largely recreated European art.

As for his lady, she who in 1816 seemed so keen (yet was not nearly so keen as she seemed) to prove him mad, it is enough to say that she died in 1861, having lived to take on Robertson of Brighton as her spiritual director, to develop unseemly ideas about Augusta, and to confide those ideas to an American sensation-monger. A charitable explanation is that Pippin was a very plausible and moving yet a most mischievous and inexorable monomaniac: one who knew not when she did ill and lied, and when she did not. In other words, she was—as I see her—a piece of self-righteousness so complete, so assertive, so full of will and purpose and approval, that she had but to do ill to make her ill-doing virtue—but to utter a lie for her utterance

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to make her lie a truth. She married Byron, and she so put her talent out to use—that it is not nearly so difficult as it used to be to account for the ‘cold heart and serpent smile’ and the ‘unfathomed depths of guile’ of a famous passage in *Manfred*. I am not sure that it was not the best thing that she could have done—for Byron, for letters, for the race. But there are times when I can’t help wishing that she’d married some one else. Wordsworth, for instance. Wordsworth? It is pretty certain that, if she had, he, the impeccable, would have had plenty of opportunity to learn ‘how awful goodness is’; while, as for his sister . . . O Dorothy, dear Dorothy—the very different sort of martyr you might be!

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I

IN 1622 'N. O.' printed for Thomas Walkly: 'and are to be sold at his Shop, at the sign of the Eagle and Child, in Brittan's Bursse': the 'Tragœdy of Othello the Moore of Venice,' as it had been 'divers times acted at the Globe and at the Black-Friars by his Maiestie's Servants.' This is the first *Othello*. 'To commend it I will not,' Walkly says; 'for that which is good I hope every man will commend, without entreaty; and I am the bolder because the Author's name is sufficient to vent his work.' Then, the year after (1623), came the First Folio; and in 1630 Walkly, who seems to have been in pocket by his earlier venture, published a Second Quarto. It is of no particular interest or importance: the text, as we have it, being Walkly *plus* Heminge and Condell, the First Quarto *plus* the First Folio. The latter version is longer than Walkly's by some hundred and fifty lines; but the Walkly, printed (Mr. Herford conjectures) 'from an old copy of the play, as curtailed, and otherwise modified, for performance,' is very much richer in 'oaths and expletives' than the Heminge and Condell, and is therefore of respectable authority.

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As the first recorded performance of *Othello* is dated 1604: in the November of which year it was presented before the Court at Whitehall: and as the style, as beseems the subject, is 'simple, sensuous, and passionate' to the *nth* degree: a style with memories of *Hamlet* yet with scarce a foretaste of *Macbeth*: it is assumed that 1604 was the birth-year of this unrivalled achievement in intimate, or domestic, drama, and that the text, as we have it, is very much the text that left Shakespeare's hand.

II

THE material is engagingly old and plain, at the same time that it is unalterably and essentially eternal. As stated recently by a critic, a critic, by the way, of the same name as the 'Moore's' first printer, it is simply the story of what your Modern Frenchman has elected to denote and to discriminate as *un crime passionnel*. In Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, where Shakespeare found the raw suggestion of his mighty and magnificent presentation of jealousy: of jealousy, too, in its operation on a mind which, rich in other sorts of experience, is, sexually speaking, next door to virginal: the passionnal crime is ever so much more persuasively paragraphed than it is in Mr. Walkly's amiable *boutade*; for in Cinthio the hero is not Othello (he is not so much, I believe, as named) but Iago, his Ensign, 'in love with Desdemona.' To that fair and innocent creature Cinthio's Antient imparts the purpose of his passion; she understands him not; he instantly conceives her enamoured of the party

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we know as Michael Cassio. So he goes to work, corrupts the Moor, plots Desdemona's death, and the Lieutenant's; and, in the end, after sand-bagging the object of his passion into the other world in her husband's presence, pulling down the ceiling upon her broken body, and giving out that she has been killed by a fallen beam, turns on the Moor, accuses him of murder, gets him tortured and done to death, and having thus justified his Renaissance habit, and purged himself of his *crime d'amour*, goes gallantly to justice on another count, and accepts the sweet compulsion of the Rope for another crime. It is in this rather blackguard story of a blackguard lecher's disappointment and revenge that our Archimage discovered his 'Othello.' He astonishes always, when you come to look into his treatment of other men's material. His method is ever royal: he lays hands on what he wants, and the fact that he wants it makes it his and none else's. I know not that, anywhere in his work, is there discovered so clear a proof of sovereignty as here. Othello, Iago, Cassio, Emilia, Desdemona—even the Handkerchief—all these figure in the twenty-seventh of the *Hecatomithi*. Yet to compare the *Novella* and the Play is to live in two worlds at once, and, so living, to be utterly and everlastingly cognisant of the inexpressible difference between creation as Cinthio understood and practised it, and creation as it was apprehended and done by William Shakespeare.

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III

IN Cinthio's anecdote, or *compte-rendu*, the interest is almost wholly one of incident. The Novelist, or Reporter, is primarily concerned with—not character, nor action in its effect on character, but—action for its own sake, action as material for narrative. His Moor, his Lieutenant, his Desdemona, are counters all: such character-interest as he discovers is contained in his Antient; and he even is no more personal than any trim, literal incarnation of the clear-eyed, clean, self-seeking, ruthless, self-sufficing scoundrelism of Cesare Borgia would be. Cinthio's Antient is wholly lacking in those touches of doubt, those instants of inquiry, those hints and flashes of internal conflict, those glimpses of desperate debate between Mind and Appetite, between Brain and Temperament, which lend so potent and so variable a magic to the portraiture of that strange, brilliant, evil-speaking, evil-thinking, evil-doing 'demi-devil': that parcel-tamed, over-civilised man-eating tiger, which we know as Iago. He is Cinthio's hero: but in Cinthio his psychology remains obscure: in fact, we know as much and as little of him as we know of the chief agent in any criminal affair which was reported yesterday. Stated in Police Court terms: he is a subaltern, who tries to lie with his General's wife; failing in his intent, he gets jealous of an airy rival; poisons his General's ear; has the satisfaction of bruising the lady of his desire to death—as a positive confirmed whore too!—in the eye of him he'd fain have cuckolded; experiences a wolfish joy in the death

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of that once potential horned beast ; and, in the end, is himself sent down to the Pit on quite other grounds than poor Disdemona's broken breast-bone and spine, and with never so much as a memory or a thought of the cuckold that was not to be, whom he had escorted to the bounds of Space and Time with every circumstance of miserableness and hate. That is pretty much as he half exists in the *Hecatomithi*: for the simple reason that Cinthio, having made him play his part, with supreme success, in the affairs of Disdemona and the Moor, as a good enough Renaissance Italian, a Cesare Borgia on the smallest scale, was content to ask no more of him, but to let him end even as in an enlightened Italy such small change of Machiavelli's ideal Prince might end, and very often did. In *Othello* all this is changed : Iago quits the Police-Court (so to say) for the purlieus of Humanity at large, and, instead of depending for immortality on the word of a mere reporter, is taken up, and shaken, and squeezed, and made to know something of himself, and to make that much of himself, and a great deal besides, intelligible to others, by the greatest *manieur d'hommes* that ever lived. The result is such an exemplary presentation of active, motiveless, and militant wickedness as Balzac, say—the Balzac of Philippe Bridau and Cousin Betty—has not so much as approached.

IV

Is it quite made out? I am reluctant to determine. I think it is ; but I have to admit that, if it be, the

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achievement is accomplished largely by means of soliloquy : an expedient in dramatic art abominable to the play-going mind. Yet was it a common device with Shakespeare, to whom its practice saved much trouble : nay, made things possible which in its absence could not have been essayed. Accepting it for the compromise it is, you may say, I think, that, thanks to its use, Iago is entirely credible. Despite the majestic assurance and completeness of his presentment as a chief actor in the play, we should not know him as we do if we were denied the privilege of sitting with him in the privy chamber of his thought, and taking our fill, and more, of those terrible mental practices by which he seeks, in the dry light of an excellent and daring intelligence, to reconcile his action with his conscience, his processes with his results, and, half in earnest, half in jest, as it were to excuse himself before his soul. He is a piece of pure intellect : he has gaiety, wit, invention, a kind of lethal humour ; he is versed in ' politic authors,' and, besides, he is deeply read in the books of Character and Life, so that he ' knows all qualities of human dealing with a most learned spirit ' ; he discovers in himself a fine observer, a shrewd and gluttonous critic ; first and last he is high in resolve, stern of heart, swift and resolute of hand ; in speech he is liberal to the point of intemperance, with an odd trick of obscenity, whether suggested or phrased, which he has practised till it has mastered him, and in which the World, if it were but wise, would find proof indubitable of the inherent baseness of his mind. ' Said a fine critic to me long years ago, in

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the great Salvini times: 'You may meet Iago on any Yorkshire racecourse'; and, the inevitable mutations duly made, I take the remark to be intrinsically just. Palmer of Rugely, the poisoning creature, was of Iago's type and strain; and the Ring breeds many such potential beasts of prey. These are the men who kill, and are half surprised and half angered to find, as they generally do, that Killing is called *Murder*, is an offence before the Law, and has to be expiated on the Gallows. These wretches play with Evil much as a young man plays with Life; and are just as sorry for themselves when they come to the unchanging end.

For the rest, Iago, like his kind at large, is wholly the creature of the Event he quickens and stage-manages. He gulls Roderigo, he gulls Cassio, he gulls Othello into killing Desdemona, and essaying to compass his Lieutenant's murder. But, though he never so much as suspect it, the mortal issue he has made imminent, masters him ever, and, being determined, leaves him the most wretched slave this side Eternity. He starts by 'guying' an aged and respectable Senator on a most delicate and peculiar point of honour, in terms so rank that Shakespeare himself, good as he was at filth (and none better ever lived), has not improved on them; he ends as the murderer whole or parcel-gilt of Othello, Desdemona, Roderigo, and Emilia, with a bad wound in his body, the assurance of being done to death, and the knowledge that, thanks to him, the Cassio he so miserably loathed and scorned is Governor of Cyprus. For all his vocabulary and for all his brains, his contempt for elementary human law is

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ever too strong for him. He makes the best of circumstances he can ; he wins his points ; he is always alert, maleficent, superior to his opportunity ; and in the long-run he is found to be merely the peer of the Hogarthian Thomas Idle.

V

BUT, to make a play, it is not enough to present Intelligence at odds with Morals. For, as was long since pointed out to me by my dear friend Fleeming Jenkin, the staple of Drama is Emotion. ‘You must have Incident,’ he argued, in his fine, logical way, ‘or your Emotion will not be Strong ; you must have Character, or it will not be Interesting ; you must have Style, or your presentation of it, whatever it be, will not be Literature.’ But, if you lacked all these (the contention was) you might stagger through, and grip your audience, and achieve your end, if only you had Emotion. Dumas *père*, though Jenkin knew it not, had said the same thing years before. There was an essential difference, he remarked, between himself and Hugo, ‘le Penseur’ (so the loyal old Artist called the greatest Liar in all Drama), and the difference consisted in this : Hugo could do nothing in the play-writing way without what one may call the fripperies of drama,—Horns of *Hernani*, Tombs of *Charlemagne*, ‘*Soupers à Ferrare*,’ Choruses of Monks, Coffins, Thunder and Lightning, Ruined Castles, and the like ; whereas all *he* wanted was ‘four trestles, four boards, two actors, and a passion.’ ’Tis the briefest, the most comprehensive, the most

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luminous statement of the essentials of drama that ever, I believe, was made ; and it fits the *Othello* of Shakespeare as it fits the Æschylean *Oresteia* like a glove.

Scene by scene and act by act, the Moor of Venice moves with an irresistible stride to an inevitable end ; 'tis a lasting and affecting proof, if any proof were needed, that the 'well-made play' did not begin with 'Antony' and 'la Tour de Nesle' ; it shows that the Sardou formula and the Ibsen formula were mere matters of to-day, and that here at least is a point at which the Sophocles of the *Œdipus* might take hands with Shakespeare, and own that, his own masterpiece, all radiant and serene as it appears, is no greater nor more splendid an achievement in design, in construction, in effect, than this. This is another way of saying that, Iago apart, the interest of *Othello* is entirely and unalterably emotional. You might play it in a barn, and it would still fulfil itself ; for the singular reason that here, wherever you look, are old Dumas' 'two actors and a passion,' and that what Jenkin called the 'emotion' is never absent. The actors change : are now Othello and Iago, now Desdemona and Emilia, now Othello and Desdemona, now Emilia and Othello, now Othello and Fate, the tremendous, the inevitable : even Death. But the passion persists : it shifts its quality as the Master wills, takes on the hues, speaks with the voice, dares with the furiousness of love and hate and jealousy and misery and murder and despair. But, once evoked, it never lets go of your throat ; and this is what makes *Othello* the play of plays it is. I think that *Lear*

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is bigger, as being more elemental (let us say) ; I think that *Hamlet* is certainly more subtle, more engaging, more romantic ; I think that in *Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth*, perhaps, too, in *Troilus*, we get more of such vital and undisguisable essentials as went to the making of our Prospero-Proteus, our Man of Men, our Chief of Poets. But nowhere in his achievement has he discovered a greater capacity, a clearer insight, a more assured and royal method, than here. Of course, he plundered Cinthio ; but who was Cinthio that he should not be plundered. And of what effect were Cinthio now—he, and his Antient, and his Lieutenant, his Moor, and his Disdemona—had he not been translated, and glorified, and eternised in terms of very Shakespeare ?

VI

TRAGEDY is an abstraction of life at its quint-essential points ; its passages of high-climbing, inoubliable, annihilating rapture ; its supreme moments of envy, hate, wrath, misery, suspicion, lust, despair. And Shakespeare, the great ‘Abstractor of Quintessences,’ accomplished no more splendidly difficult task in all the years of his tremendous and triumphing achievement than when he made his Moor, not merely plausible, but entirely human and credible. It has been, and perhaps still is, objected to this august and immortal thing, that Othello is too ‘easily moved’ ; that his ear is too wide, that is, his mind too prompt, his heart too eager to entertain suspicion ; and that he is so

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readily satisfied in the matter of proof that he might give points to such typical exemplars of horndom as Arnolphe in *l'Ecole des femmes* and the Sganarelle of *le Cocu imaginaire*. These objections have, of course, been traversed, and traversed to so complete a purpose that I note them only for the form's sake, and with never a thought of going back on them. 'Tis enough to note that Tragedy, being a quint-essentialised abstraction of life in its most desperate potentialities, has its own convention, and is governed by none but its own rules, and that to begin upon the examination of an exemplary piece of tragedy by questioning the propriety of that convention were to make Criticism impossible. To accept the Tragic Convention is to find the character of Othello an 'entire and perfect crysolite' among creations: an achievement in presentation which Shakespeare himself has not surpassed; a study in passion-wrought character in which the last is said. 'Tis as it were a soul in earthquake and eclipse; and there is never a detail, never a touch of the cataclysm, however variable and minute, but is realised and recorded with so consummate an artistry, an intelligence so abounding, so complete, and so assured, that the issue savours of inspiration.

VII

It is history that J.-B. Poquelin, called Molière, wrote for his company, and that, cutting his parts to his actors and actresses much as a modern snip cuts you his 'tailor-mades' and his 'suits' to the physical idiosyncrasies of his customers, female and

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male, succeeded, being an accomplished and very admirable master in this sort of sartorials, not only in fitting his customers but, also, in founding and establishing a tradition: a tradition, too, of such comprehensive and enduring potency that, in its shadow, Coquelin *ainé* plays Scapin much as Molière played Scapin, while Agnès (say) and Horace are to this day presented in the same terms, on the same level, so far as is possible in the same spirit as were imposed by J.-B. Poquelin on le Sieur Lagrange and on that brilliant and beautiful Mlle. de Brie, of whom 'tis told that, at sixty, she was still the best Agnès of them all. Now, Molière was the greatest Actor-Manager¹ that ever lived; but it is obvious that Shakespeare, being a person of (shall I say?) considerable intelligence, anticipated him in this matter, and, having a great actor, Burbage to wit, in his company, wrote as carefully and as joyously for him as, long years after, le Sieur Poquelin wrote for Molière and Lagrange and de Brie. I would go so far as to say that had Dick Burbage—a Stratford man, too!—been of another temperament than he was, and lacked the strange, romantic, passionate face he had, there had been differences in Richard, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Othello, as we have them, and that they who would fain present the dramatist from his plays would do well to look carefully and keenly into the intellectual and emotional quality of his chief of actors. But such argument is not for here nor now; and I end

¹ That he wrote his best for himself and his temporary woman, or 'leading lady,' is but to say that he was a Manager-Actor in the fullest sense of the term.

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with this reflection: 'This afternoon, at the Globe Theatre, First Performance of "Othello, the Moore of Venice"; Othello, Master Richard Burbadge.' *Othello?* with Burbadge 'up,' and Shakespeare prompting him from the wings? What a *première*!

‘T. E. B.’¹

I

THE MAN

It was in 1860 that I knew him first ; and the occasion of my knowing him was this. The old Crypt Grammar School had been founded in 1509—or was it 1519?—by a burgess of the City, one John Cooke ;² had served its term, so far as ‘certain poor boys’ were concerned, for many years ; had gone to wreck and confusion, and ceased from fulfilling its purpose for many others ; had come

¹ *Letters of Thomas Edward Brown, Author of Fo’c’s’le Yarns.* Edited, with an Introductory Memoir, by Sidney T. Irwin. (London : A. Constable and Co., Ltd., 1900.) In two volumes.

² He is buried in the Cathedral, he and his wife Joan ; and there is a monument to them in the nave of that noble fane which I have considered many times, and can see before me as I write. It is in the wall, and, if I mistake not, is railed off from the general. In the centre is a lozenge with an appropriate inscription ; and on the right hand of the lozenge, in an attitude of prayer, is John Cooke, in the costume of the period, and behind him in a *diminuendo*, a sort of vanishing quantity, are his eight sons, all kneeling, and all costumed, and all praying. And on the left hand of the lozenge is Joan his wife, also in the costume of the period ; and behind her, in a *diminuendo*, a sort of vanishing quantity, are her seven daughters. As a small boy, I looked much at them : wondering, especially, if they went on like that in real life. Also how, if they (the eight sons) dressed like that, they escaped being stoned in Gloucester streets.

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into the hands of divers persons having authority, and had by them been purged of its iniquities, and given a fresh start in life, with a sufficient income, and a great capacity for useful work among the offspring of the middling and the lower middle-classes. I do not know its history in detail ; but I imagine it to have been badly misgoverned and mishandled, and to have fallen so low that only on reform and change from the foundations upwards could there be any hope for it. Well, reform it got, and change—as absolute, both, as the Chancery Commissioners could give ; and they set the seal upon their work by the discovery and appointment of a competent staff. In the attainment of this object they succeeded perfectly ; and the best of their gift, though the City knew it not, was the headmaster. He was not more than thirty ; his career had been one of exceptional and peculiar brilliancy ; he was a double-first (Classics and Modern History) ; he had a gift of exciting and a gift of teaching. Unfortunately for us, the boys he might have shaped and trained, he was also a man of character and genius ; and, as I now know, his patience had been somewhat hardly tried during the time of his servitorship at ‘the House.’ He was intolerant of interference—especially such futile interference as he must endure ; he was contemptuous of comment—above all, such ignorant and pettifogging comment as he got. His critics were impudent ; I think they thought he was going to run the school on *Pinnock* and *Mangnall’s Questions*, and the like, and were disgusted beyond measure to find that he meant his boys to have decent books—books which

cost money, and could not be done without. He, on his part, was insolent, as he had every right to be, considering the stamp and quality of his assailants ; and that he stooped to their level, and did battle with them in the local prints, is, as I now see, a proof that he was uncomfortable from the first, and could in nowise realise the kind of illiteracy—vain, fat-witted, beery, excessively conservative—into whose midst he had descended.¹ Be this as it may, he was a failure, and in Mr. Irwin’s memoir his passage through the sleepy grey city of my birth, his conduct of the old Crypt School is referred to merely as ‘the Gloucester episode.’ That he hated the memory is plain ; and it may be that I wrong his noble ghost in treating of it as I have done. But I do not think so. It is a platitude that everything depends on the point of view. And I am fain to say that his point of view is not mine. From his, ‘the Gloucester episode’ was, I take it, an unpleasing and ridiculous experiment. From

¹ The point is, that he had to deal with the sons of a class which hated scholarship, and knew nothing of letters. He would have been, I take it, less out of his element at the Cathedral School, whereat there was an atmosphere of reading, a tradition of the humanities (so to speak) : where the mortar-board (if I may so put it) had been worn for generations, so that when we of the Crypt began to go abroad in that head-gear, the Cathedral School boys mixed and intertwined their tassels with blue, to distinguish themselves from us, the upstarts, who had laid hands on the hitherto inviolable black. Brown’s misfortune—(it might so well have been his opportunity !)—was that he had to create a tradition, and that time and his material were against him. As to his material : when he was last with me he recalled the performance of a youth, who—(the Head and his assistants had to teach us cricket !)—being sent out to field, protested, to the master in charge, in these terms :—‘ Look ’ere, Sur, what I wants to know is, when’ll it be my turn to *knaowck*.’ As to time, perhaps he was impatient. But, given his temperament, could he have been aught else ?

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mine, it was an unqualified success: since it made him known to me, and opened to me ways of thought and speech that—well! since it came upon me like a call from the world outside—the great, quick, living world—and discovered me the beginnings, the true materials, of myself.¹

'Tis wellnigh forty years ago that the revelation came to me; and that it came through him has ever been a joy to mind and heart. That it came to me here and there—in broken lights, at odd moments, on remote occasions—that neither is, nor has ever been, anything to the purpose. The matter of that purpose is that he was T. E. B., the man of genius—the first I'd ever seen; and that, being so, he took hold upon me with a grip he never knew, and led me out into the nearer distances—into the shadows at the edge of the great sea—to a point I might never have reached without him. What he did for me, practically, was to suggest such possibilities in life and character as I had never dreamed. He was singularly kind to me¹ at a moment when I needed kindness even more than I needed encouragement. The occasion was an examination; I did surprisingly well—without knowing it; he rejoiced in the effect, and did what he could to reward me for my share in it. The names were called, and mine—

¹ Thus (the italics are mine)—thus another pupil, Mr. H. F. Brown:—'He was a "widener." He made one feel that there was something beyond the school, beyond successful performances at lessons or at games; *there was a whiff of the great world brought in by him.*'

² Much as the Regius Professor, Jacobson, had been kind to him at Oxford—and, *mutatis mutandis*, on the same grounds; but the gift of books was of infinitely greater consequence in my case than Jacobson's had been in his.

mine!—was once and again the first: to the astonishment, it may be the disgust, of the listening benches ; and after that, the school dismissed, there was an interview. Shall I ever forget its meanest circumstance? I trow not ; and the thing is, that he forgot it no more than I, but spoke of it the last time I saw him—a year or two before he died. I could not follow him far on that occasion. Old memories were too much for me. It was close on forty years since it had happened ; an infinite deal of water had gone under the bridges in the meanwhile ; life had had its fill of pupil and master both, and there had been joy and achievement and trouble for both master and pupil, and it may be that death had drawn us closer to each other than all else. Yet he remembered that interview, and would fain have spoken of it. I was younger—much younger—than he, and could say nothing. I meant to have it out with him the next time ; but there was none. When, in due course, he came again to England, I got a joyous letter from him from Cardiff, dilating gaudily upon a certain essay on Robert Burns, which (it appeared) had filled him with pride and happiness. But he got no farther than Clifton. There the brave, brilliant, helpful life fell on a sudden and a happy close. There the amazing temperament, the great heart, the thrice-filled brain, the inexhaustible and unfailing gift of sympathy, the infinite understanding of things human which went to the making of that unique thing, ‘T. E. B.’—there, I say, these gifts lapsed, and he passed into the past. There are many, very many living, on whose lives his mark is indelible. There are many, not so

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many, not nearly so many, nearer to him than those others, to whom the world can never again be the world they knew when he walked its ways with them. I take leave to say that there is none in either lot but thanks God for his presence, and is happier and stronger in the thought of what he was and said and did.

Scholar and humorist ; poet and teacher and priest ; a notable and lavish temperament, quite excellently disciplined and equipped ; a born writer and a born observer—of such bountiful differences as these was 'T. E. B.' In some sort, they had his best who knew him day by day and year by year, and were privileged to make out life with him ; for, at any rate, they had his voice, his eyes, his presence, his talk, the strengthening and comforting effect of his friendship. Such triumphs of humanity there are—such exemplars of the Pure Creature—whose influence ends with their removal from the stage whereon they have played the brilliant and distinguished part for which our mother Nature cast them at the moment of their birth. They are miracles ; but they pass. They are lights against the dark ; but their place must one day know them no more, and where they flashed and wavered and shone there is presently the blackness of the eternal night. They are like Byron as he appeared, the end being come and a new point of view being necessary, to Thomas Carlyle ; craters empty of flame and beset with ashes and snow. Not of these was the man of whom I speak. Mr. Irwin tells you that he had all the brilliancy, all the grave and riotous gaiety, all the grace and force and charm, of

the ideal talker ; and there is none that knew him, I take it, who will not agree. But that was only the beginnings of him : that was merely the man in his everyday aspect, as he showed, and could not choose but show himself, in the act of paying his way through life. But, for our good fortune, who did not and could not rejoice in his neighbourhood, he had a vast deal more than that. As I have said, he was a born writer and observer ; and he poured himself out alike in prose and verse. Of his verses I shall say nothing on this page, except that I esteem them for as personal and as exhaustive an expression of life ¹ as the second half of the century has seen. As to his prose, here, to speak for itself, is an instalment of it in the shape of certain letters, selected and edited by Mr. S. T. Irwin, one of his closest friends, who contributes (by the way) a memoir of T. E. B., which, in its modest, unassuming way, is an achievement—in tact, reticence, taste. Speaking for myself, I think it impossible for us to have too much of the very lovable and remarkable man I have been trying to put on to paper. I want all the letters to be had ; and I want all, or nearly all, the articles which he was good enough to write for *The National Observer* and *The New Review*.²

¹ What else is Poetry ? Surely poetry is an expression of life, or it is nothing ? Matthew Arnold, I know, declared it to be ‘a criticism of life,’ and naught besides. But in this description there is more moralist than critic, and perhaps more Matthew Arnold—a writer ever with a point to make or a paradox to float—than either.

² One of Mr. Irwin’s correspondents notes of T. E. B. the Christ Church servitor—(‘tis incredible ; but a servitor he was, and a servitor at Christ Church, till he became a fellow of Oriel)—that he delighted in such books as Anthony à Wood’s. He was busy on an *Anthony à Wood* for me and *The New Review*, when he died.

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And especially I want the letters. Mr. Irwin's selection is excellent, so far as it goes. But I want more. I want T. E. B. in his fighting humour—as, in these volumes, he appears in his remarks on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* ; I want T. E. B. as he looked when he rent and tore and trampled ; I want especially more of T. E. B. the musician and the critic of music.¹ It is possible—even probable—that I shall be left wanting. For the world that reads is, after all, a frivolous, not to say an uninstructed world ; and the T. E. B. of these *Letters* is, despite his immense humanity and his admirable alertness, his immitigable felicity of phrase, a master apart : a writer, that is, who is looking, not so much for a public here and now as, for the high place which must be his in the shining and immortal hierarchy of English Literature.

I do not propose to analyse these scraps of life—these fragments, now passionate and now humorous, now radiant and serene, now melancholy and profound, now doubting and limited, which Mr. Irwin has recovered from the epistolary life of my dear dead friend and honoured master. Still less do I propose to find a place in English for them ; though, for myself, I think that they suggest both Byron

¹ Mr. E. M. Oakeley contributes an addendum to Mr. Irwin's memoir which is sorely disconcerting in its suggestiveness—and its insufficiency. So far as I can see, on one line of musical criticism you might look for the nearest to Brown in Berlioz : both being poets as well as musicians ; though Brown could turn from realising Beethoven to be Tom Baynes, which Berlioz, of course, could not. And Wagner—I can't be certain what Brown thought of the *Parsifal*. I can see that he hated the 'lewd and superfluous naughtiness' of the scenic imposture ; but what did he think of the music ? I gather that—— But no ! I won't—I will *not*—till I know.

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and Stevenson at their best, and that as to these two—both moderns, both poets, both writers,—well, here is Brown, with more heart than either, perhaps, and, certainly, a more even brilliancy, a larger set of interests, a riper wisdom, a richer and kindlier sense of the world’s beauty and the essential graciousness of human life ; and they who read can do their sorting for themselves. The great thing is that they who read should be many and fit. For these are the letters of a man of genius ; and men of genius are rarer than you might believe.

II

THE POET ¹

WE are told that to many he was only a local poet, a person who rhymed in dialect—a kind of beggar at Apollo’s gate ; and we are told by academic persons—things made after supper at the Muses’ table out of a melon rind—that he was one affected and unskilled in letters. We are told, too, that to a friend who feigned to condole with him for that his name was not found in a certain list of minor poets, ‘Perhaps,’ he said—‘perhaps I am among the majors?’ A Major Poet! ’Tis a magnificent assumption, a ‘great perhaps,’ indeed ; yet to read this Complete Edition of his verse is to be with him heart and soul. I knew it all before ; and I have taken it all again ; and I will avow my conviction that when I wrote of it as ‘the fullest expression of

¹ *The Collected Poems of T. E. Brown.* London : Macmillan.

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life' we of these late years have been privileged to consider and enjoy, I stated a truth so baldly and so niggardly that my statement clamours for enhancement. The *Letters* have shown what manner of man Brown was—how personal, how many-sided, how humorous and intense ; how rich in sentiment, yet how rich in farce ; how brilliantly and variously lettered, and how inalterably humane ; how strong in discipline, how quick with the defensive spirit, yet how riotously accidental, how beautifully unpedantic. Well, to state that that particular Brown unpacked his heart in words, and here they are—to state this, I say, should be enough for all them that have the sense of character and the right delight in letters. Brown was ever so many things : scholar, talker, mimic, *farceur*, preacher, teacher, schoolmaster, musician, lover of nature, lover of man ; yet of his very essence, before all these differences, before the talker and the mimic even, there was the man of letters, there was the artist in style. To his father (so he tells you) style was like the instinct of personal cleanliness. To himself it was that and something more : it was a part of his birthright, the master-jewel in his inheritance. To think of him beggared of any one or two of his many gifts is hard. To think of him without his literary faculty is impossible. This volume is a proof of it. The contents fall naturally into two parts ; on the one hand are the verses in English—they are models of English verse ; on the other are the poems in dialect, and of them it is not too much to say that they are unique. The great exemplar is Burns, whose achievement is a culmina-

tion, and whose genius as it were focusses all the vocal talent of a race. But I think it could be shown, and shown easily, that there is nothing to compare in Burns to the wealth of life and humour and fancy that is packed into these *Fo’c’s’le Yarns* of Brown’s ; while in the matter of style, the sovran quality, the Manxman, with his immense vocabulary, his notable feeling for words, his high and fine sense of literature—the Manxman, I say, has nothing to learn of the Scot. Burns, however, has his tradition, and ’tis over a century old already ; while Brown is even of them that died o’ Wednesday, and his tradition, which he created, is all in front of him ; so that ’tis idle, on the face of it, to build comparisons between the two. But to place a good thing one cannot but approach the best ; and in Brown’s case, far more than in most others, none but the best will serve. For the rest, my appeal to Burns will, I doubt not, move many to laughter in these days, and many to wrath. That is in the nature of things. Fifty years hence the comparison will seem less arbitrary than now, and the conclusion will certainly be held not nearly so impavid as it reads to-day.

In any case here is a poet who is also a man, and who writes, whether in fine English or in the ‘asynartete octosyllables’ of Tom Baynes, like a master ; so that his work, whether in English or in Manx, should go straight to the brain and heart of everybody that loves good poetry. That it will do so at once I do not for one moment believe. The manner is too personal, the man too instant, too intent on himself or on what he has to say, too

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violent, and also too clean-spoken, too desperately given to have nothing dubitable in his utterance. At a first glance, he has a kind of likeness to Browning. But come to intimacy, and the shadow flees, the likeness dislimns ; you find that the one man does where the other man has but feigned, that books and life have been to the one what books alone were to the other, that the one knew and postulated while the other—curious, eager, impertinent for the most part, mainly inarticulate—only groped and fumbled after knowledge, and was content to fumble and grope in speech as he had done before in thought. All the same there remains a likeness ; and, time and again, in reading Brown, you come upon a fancy, an image, half-beautiful and half-grotesque, but realised—realised to the last touch of down on the feather, so to say :—

This sea was Lazarus, all day
At Dives' gate he lay,
And lapped the crumbs.
Night comes ;
The beggar dies :
Forthwith the Channel, coast to coast,
Is Abraham's bosom, and the beggar lies
A lovely ghost :—

till you rub your eyes as you read, and think :—
'Hallo! here's Browning, doing it—but doing it!—doing it as he never did it before!' As to their gospel, it is substantially the same. But Browning preaches it, even 'local-preaches' it, as in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and *Cleon*, and that *Death in the Desert* in which he seeks—a strange ambition, surely!—to convert Strauss—or is it Renan?—to the turn of

thought and the way of belief of good, fair-living, high-thinking Clapham. Brown’s, on the other hand, is blazoned or implied in all he does ; and in all he does the Teacher and the Poet are one. ’Tis a true man’s optimism that bears him up and through and on : there is nothing servile about it, nothing slavish, nor spasmodical, nor pot-valiant. He lives and does and suffers—ah, how he suffers !¹ But if there be wailing and gnashing of teeth, there is always the man behind ; and in the man there is always the optimist : and the lesson to be learned from both is constant and inalterable. As for Tennyson, he imitates that unrivalled writer of verses a little languidly, a little distantly in *Bella Gorry*. But when, when can we imagine our unrivalled writer of verses telling such a story as *Bella Gorry*’s ? Having all his work before us, the answer is easy. And the answer is, in one word, ‘Never.’ He could never have told such a story, because, in despite of *Rizpah*, he was never interested—not really interested—in maternity, but only in the processes, charming or not, by which maternity becomes possible. Brown, however, has done the thing—‘Nursing the baby !’ So Parson Gale—for all time ; and has done it in verse which in its languid intolerance of difficulties is, while entirely self-sufficing, by no means a bad criticism of Tennyson’s own. That for the larger lines, the big outward semblances : when it comes to comparisons, achievements, intricacies, I think there is

¹ See *Aber Stations* and the thrice-admirable *Epistola ad Dakyns*, and the daring, the grotesque, the wonderful and taking *Dartmoor : Sunset at Chagford* (a piece he never revised for press), with many things besides.

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scarce one alive (so besotted am I in my view of the reading Briton!)—I think there is scarce one alive who reads verse habitually, and knows the difference between truth and falsehood, but will prefer Brown's *Chalse a Killy* before the old, thrice-laurelled Laureate's *May Queen*. Tennyson makes a pretty, sentimental picture, and runs you on a May Queen that never could have been in any circumstances regnant on this globe. Brown, on the other hand, takes his Chalse, and carries him through all sorts of strange, ridiculous experiences:—

And I did play upon a comb:—

and makes you love and pity him long or you are done with the verse in which he 's celebrate. Surely in the presence of such a brave, pathetic reality the May Queen, with Robin, and the silver-haired parson, and the garden-tools ('upon the grannary floor') even the matchless touches of dumb nature:—

When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass, and the sword-grass, and the bullrush
in the pool:—

surely these are nothing? I am speaking still of Brown's English verses. But if I turn to dialect, and bring out the incomparable *Mater Dolorosa*, where, I ask, is Tennyson then? 'Tis but thirty to forty lines of half-Manx, half-English speech; it is only the wail of a woman with her true time gone for nothing, and her weary womb, and her baffled breast clamant—clamant! Yet out of this book of Brown's I look for its like in vain.

He loved to live. It was good to him to be

himself alive, and to steep himself in life as it was revealed to him in the breathing, sentient, passionate environment of which he was the centre. There is scarce one of these English poems of his but is the cry of a living man. However strait and severe its form, the soul of it tingles and throbs with being ; and where the utterance is personal—as in the *Epistola*, and *Aber Stations*, and the *Sunset at Chagford*—the effect is poignant in the extreme. There are moments, indeed, when that odd confession of his, ‘I am a born sobber,’ recurs to your mind with an insistence that is not wholly agreeable : when you pause, in fact, to wonder to what heights of self-revelation he would have risen had he *not* been the artist, above all the humorist he was. I believe that, in his heart of hearts, he was not averse from ‘ wallowing naked in the pathetic ’ ; but I am sure that, if this were so, his inexhaustible humour, his fine sense of things as they are, that solemn and chastened joy in the Abstract Fool which he confesses that he had, his abounding humanity, his unending interest in the comedy of life—these kept him straight. And thus it was that, if times there came, when he let himself go, and made as if he beat out his heart against the wires of the cage in which, by God’s will (that was an essential in his theory of the world), he was cabined, he was never so lost to good literary manners that the glimpse of a landscape or the consciousness of a character could not, and did not, call him back to his greater and better self. Man and nature, nature and man, romantically and humorously considered : these, in fact, were the two elements in the scene in which he

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exulted with a right sense of mastery. And it is to note that he selected neither, but took them both as they came to him, like the strenuous optimist he was. God had made things so, and therefore things were to be accepted and treated as God made them: the rough with the smooth, storm with shine, the harlot with the maid, what ought to be but isn't with what shouldn't have been but is. Hence, I take it, his indefatigable interest, whether humorous or tragic, in the thing called character. He wanted it, anyhow and anywhere; but he preferred it as it is; not altogether good nor altogether bad. If he light on a kind of saint—as in Parson Gale—he does him all the honour he can; but all the reverence he shows for Parson Gale and all the delight he has in Parson Gale do not for a moment prevent him from telling the squalid underside of the Parson's life with Mrs. Gale (*Christmas Rose*). It is just this blessed gift of seeing people as they are, and not as they ought to be, which makes Brown the man of men, and so the poet among poets that he is. Take *Peggy's Wedding*, for instance, and you will see at once that it is imitated from Swift; but you will also see, if you have any taste of letters in you, that it is infinitely better art than Swift's, in that it gives you, with a touch of farce perhaps, but with not so much as the hint of a departure from the big lines of human nature, two characters whom you have never met before, but whom you will know to your dying day. And that sequence of portraitures called *In the Coach*—is there anything like them elsewhere? And is there any fault to find with them for what they are? And the *Mater Dolorosa*—the

poor, half-articulate creature, with her frustrated instinct, and her aching bosom, and her reeling brain—who is there, as I said before, that has done the like for us? Not Tennyson, or *he had been* an even greater poet than he is ; and not Browning, or *he 'd have reeled* you off some fifty pages of blank verse, with a cry or two here and there, and a dagger or a bowl to wind up withal. Societies would certainly have raged together over the discrepancy between what the heroine said and what her historian obviously intended to have it thought she meant ; and, about these high matters, we might, were the poet still alive, be fighting, fighting evermore. That, though, is not Brown's way at all. He does not sit down to write—or, rather, half-write—the facts, and all the facts that develop from them, and all the developments from those developments, as nearly exhibited as a flux of words and a partial understanding of the central circumstance will permit. Not a bit of it. Forty lines or so, and his effect is complete. *He* deals with nothing but essentials ; and his *Mater Dolorosa* is an achievement apart in our various and noble literature. That it's the result of 'wallowing' as aforesaid may be cheerfully conceded. Stevenson did not so wallow : knowing his own talent as he knew it—and he knew it as a runner knows his pace, or a cricketer his best hit—he was certainly right. But Shakespeare did ; so did Dickens ; so did Scott. And I conceive that Brown, could we but come at him now, would far rather sin with these—Scott, Dickens, Shakespeare, to name no more—than be saved with Stevenson.

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The moral of this, however, is by the way : is only polemic, literary polemic—polemic, that is, which is found at the end to have its source, its roots, its ‘strong foundations’ in the quality called *taste*, and is therefore a thing disputable by everybody who does not happen to see eye to eye, or rather to feel stomach and stomach with the original opinionist. In the circumstances it is better to go on with the consideration of Brown the poet, and especially the poet of *Fo’c’s’le Yarns*, the rough-and-ready verses,¹ into which he expressed, not merely all the Manxman in him but also, all his humour, all his passionate love of nature, all his unrivalled sense of character, all his theory of life and the world and time, and therewith as much of the experience and the results, observed and apprehended, of his long and varied and peculiar life as the number of lines he wrote would hold. It is in some sort to their disadvantage that they are written in dialect ; for the public which reads verse is easily frightened from its purpose, and had far liefer read plain English than (let us say) good Scots : so that, other qualities apart, Burns—even Burns!—can never capture or control in any latitude south of his own midden a fortieth, even a five-hundredth, part of that public—many-mooded, indiscriminating, fulsome—which is as it were the natural inheritance of Byron or Tennyson, or even Keats. And the worst is, that Brown being a convinced and resolute artist, the public gets no help from him. He does not

¹ So they seem. But to look carefully into their structure and consider the means by which they achieve their effect is to see that they are a result of conscious and deliberate art.

write Manx as Barnes wrote Dorsetese : he does not, that is, write English verses with a local accent, but otherwise with ‘two gowns and everything handsome about them.’ On the contrary, his syntax and his prosody are the island’s own, and he will bate you no ace of her claim to be heard on her own peculiar conditions in her own especial terms. Barnes, I take it, wrote in English, and added the local accent (as, by the way, at times did Burns) ; so that, if you feel not equal to an encounter with his rustic—so-called rustic—Muse, you have but to order her to change her shoes and stockings, and get out of that apron, and the like, and she falls at once to her native tongue, which is clean Wordsworthian English. Brown’s Tom Baynes—‘Old salt, old rip, old friend!’—is not a bit like this. In his use of Manx-English he is just as much Manx and just as little English as his author : who, indeed, invented him as a sort of escape-pipe for the mingled steam of English and Manx which was constantly generating in his own boiler. The effect is as remarkable as I know in verse ; and I see no earthly reason why that select and careful public, which is addicted to the reading of verse, should not put in its spoon and sup with the best of us. The dialect is, no doubt, an hindrance and an offence. But, after all, a dialect is soon mastered ; and once you realise that ‘priddhas’ = *potatoes*, that ‘pinjane’ = *curds and whey*, that ‘arrim’ and ‘gorrim’ are only localism for *at him* and *got him*, that ‘at’ is a kind of preposition-of-all-work, and means *at* or *by* or *about*, exactly as the speaker wills, there is little indeed in Brown the Manxman to keep you at a

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halt. And there are such worlds to bring you on! Open the *Yarns* where you will, it matters not : the book being the *Yarns*, you are ever assured of some matchless expression of something—a bee in a flower, an easy pipe, a night in the cells, a sailor's home, a fugue of Bach's, a man in drink, a woman in love, white witchcraft and black, the pool at Bethesda, a storm at sea, a carted harlot, a summer dawn, a milking, a perfect priest—*que sçays-je?* The *Yarns* are rich as life itself in character, emotion, experience, tragedy, farce, comedy, fact ; and there is none of their innumerable details but is presented with an assurance, an understanding of essentials, a mastery of means that stamp its presentation as literature. As for poetry, what is poetry? 'The only words in the only order'? So be it! Apply the test to these *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, and you will find at once that, given the dialect, they also are poetry, and poetry of the most authentic strain. 'Tis small wonder to me that he who made them believed that they would triumph in the end. He thought they would nourish and enkindle and bring on the great Manx poet. I do not agree with him there. I also believe in them, but I believe in them for themselves. We may be wrong : he, the master, I, the pupil—we may both be wrong. What is certain is that if the great Manx poet ever come along, here is as rare and fortifying a compost for him to nuzzle his genius in, as poet ever had.

After all, though, talking about Brown the poet is useless. There is nothing for it but reading him : in his English, first, certainly—in all his heights and

‘T. E. B.’

deeps, in all his brilliancies and in all his ‘wallowings.’ High or low, radiant or despondent, here is a poet anyhow. You love the style, or you do not ; but, anyhow, here is a poet. A poet in English. Then comes what I think the best of all the Browns we have—the Brown of the Manx things and the *Yarns*. Herein is vastly more than there is in most of the verse written of late about especial neighbourhoods, by rhymesters of all grades of talent and accomplishment, from the departed Laureate downwards. And the end is, simply:—‘Master his dialect, and read.’ Master his dialect, such as it is, and become a worshipper of Brown. After all, his Tom Baynes is infinitely more “literary” than most of our Laureates have been, and has, besides, a very great deal to say that few indeed among our Laureates have had the wit to conceive ; seeing that Tom Baynes is the most of what was written on the heart of T. E. B. Yes : that is so. And no better man, I think, has lived, and not many that were stronger or more helpful to his kind.

OLD ENGLAND

Is there in all literature a romance of the road so intimate and so inevitable—quite!—as *Lavengro*? I do not think there is. Or if such an one there be, it has yet to come into my ken. Not even the Lucius of *The Golden Ass* has a more plausible occasion; not even Don Quixote a more specious and a more searching incitement. Yet the good Alonso Quixada indoors were merely a provincial humorist with a distempered brain and an inordinate appetite for a certain type of fiction; while Lucius off the road would have eaten roses instantly, and so would have been healed of his translation, and come down to us as the hero of a feeble and futile tale of witchcraft. Yes, all that is true; and it may be that I began by pitching my note too high. You see, I was thinking, not of these archetypes, not of these inevitables, so much as of *Gil Blas*, and *Roderick Random*, and the adventures of Guzman d'Alfarache, and that dull and deplorable *English Rogue*, that Meriton Latroon of whose author Borrow is dullard enough to remark that he was a man of singular (or surprising) genius. So was I led astray! Even so, however, and allowing for enthusiasm, it seems to me that I am very near the

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truth when I claim for *Lavengro* a place, so far as mere inevitableness goes, with *Don Quixote* and *The Golden Ass*. As thus. The Scholar is born into a marching regiment, and so is a wanderer in his cradle. Starting from East Dereham, he sees all manner of places before he settles down at Norwich ; and if he coach thence to London, and have remarkable adventures there with publishers and Armenians and antient apple-women, you feel all the while that these things are naught, for that Mr. Petulengro is behind these things, and with him the King's Highway ; so that presently London—neither understood nor realised, neither seen nor suggested—will pass like the unsubstantial pageant that it is, and in its place you will find the open road, and 'the wind on the heath, brother,' and the 'poor person's child,' and Peter Williams, Blazing Bosville, and Isopel Berners, and the red-haired priest, and all the rest of that homespun pageant which we know. Borrow calls it 'a dream,' and thus no doubt it is rightly described : being, in fact, a dream of the writer's own adventures, not exactly as they happened and as he appeared in them, but as he would have liked to believe that they happened, and thus, and not otherwise, did other people see him. A pleasing ambition ? No doubt. But an innocent and humane one, surely ? And, no doubt, not much unlike the reality. Or, at any rate, not nearly so much unlike the reality as you might observe, if you pushed home, in the cases of other writing men.¹ Be this as it may, his 'dream' was essen-

¹ Thackeray, for instance, is said to have painted himself in Colonel Esmond. Now I am told that Borrow once inter-

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tially one of the open road, and to ignore or to misapprehend the circumstances and the fancies with which it is inwrought were to make sheer nonsense of it.

'Tis the most English of English books withal : even as the Scholar, for all his excursions into philology, is the most English of English men. Beef, beer, horses, *Moll Flanders* and the Church of England, the King and *The Newgate Calendar*,—what is there, what could there be more typically English than all these? Peter Williams, too, the follower of Wesley—Peter Williams, with Mr. Petulengro and his crew, and the old apple-woman, and Blazing Bosville, and the Postilion who was once in Italy, and the Scholar's father with his memories of Ben Brain : all these, like the landscape and the joy in highway and dell and by-way, in the wayside tavern and the near gypsy camp, like Thurtell and *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Sell*, are purely English, alike in conception and association and effect. And that rhapsody on the heroes of the ropes and stakes, with its special eulogy of Tom Spring :—'Hail to thee, six-foot Englishman of the brown eye, worthy to have carried a six-foot bow at Flodden,' and all the rest of it, even to the 'bold chorus,' 'Here's a health to old honest John Bull,' in which it culminates :—where shall you find more English and more valiant

pellated Thackeray in society as 'the most offensive snob I have ever seen, Sir,'—or words to that effect. The distance between the several points of view is obvious ; yet Thackeray may not have been utterly and hopelessly far-wandered in his presentation of himself as the sentimental Colonel. Even as Borrow may have been worse guided than I think he was when he sketched himself as the Scholar.

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stuff? And 'twas ever the same with him. Read him, for instance, on the brother who wanted to go to Rome to study painting. 'What,' says he, his cup of ale gripped mightily in his good right fist, his eye in a fine pugilistic frenzy rolling—'What hast thou to do with old Rome, and thou an Englishman? Did thy blood never glow at the mention of thy native land? As an artist merely? Yes, I trow, and with reason, for thy native land need not grudge old Rome her "pictures of the world"; she has pictures of her own, "pictures of England"; and is it a new thing to toss up caps and shout—England against the world? Yes, against the world in all, in all: in science and in arms, in minstrel strain, and not less in the art "which enables the hand to deceive the intoxicated soul by means of pictures." Seek'st models? To Gainsborough and Hogarth turn, not names for the world, maybe, but English names—and England against the world!' That is explicit, is it not? Explicit, and likewise forcible! You feel as you read that about this Englishman there is no manner of nonsense—no nonsense at all! And that if he were yet living, and any were ill-advised enough to hold a pro-Boer meeting in his neighbourhood, there would certainly be bloody noses and cracked crowns, and these of his achievement, in the hall that night! That he could rail to excellent purpose is shown in the inimitable Appendices to *The Romany Rye*; but I deem it scarce possible that, with a Little-Englander in hand, he'd have confined his treatment of the wretch to pen-and-ink. Given the occasion and the incitement, he would assuredly have found other

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and braver work for 'Long Melford' than the preparation of mere articles of impeachment. Manual coercion is, no doubt, a most disgusting form of tyranny ; and freedom of speech is an essential item in an Englishman's birthright. But it is plain that, on such a provocation as pro-Boerism, this Englishman would have rejoiced to employ the one with a view to the suppression of the other. It is impossible, of course ; but I confess that to conceive of George Borrow, alive and opugnant in the good old way, tapping Mr. Morley's claret (say), or 'administering a slashing upper-cut' (as they used to put it) to the sainted Mr. Leonard Courtney, or 'serving out' the noble Mr. Cronwright Schreiner, with a reminiscence of Jack Randall in his antient left—this is, I confess, a pastime which, however futile, is not at all displeasing to the unregenerate breast. In principle, I need scarce say, I am with *The Spectator*, that omniscient and most meritorious print. But if it came to practice, I fear that in such a mellay I could not find it in my heart to be on anybody's side but Borrow's. That, though, is ever the way of the Unregenerate. 'There's the wind on the heath, brother,' says the Lord of the Horse-Shoe to the Lord of Words ; and the Unregenerate are with the Lord of the Horse-Shoe to the hilts. 'There's the wind on the heath, brother' ; and it comes and, it goes, and there's nothing better in life. And that—for them—is the end.

I gather from Thormanby's preface to his *Boxers and their Battles* that he knew Borrow *au temps jadis*. 'Tis well—'tis mighty well. But . . . ! Did Borrow, I wonder, ever shake hands and talk

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pugilism with 'Thormanby'? Apparently not ; or 'Thormanby,' who is pleasantly garrulous and personal, and talks with a certain pride of his acquaintance with the late Jem Ward, would probably, even certainly, have told us all about it. 'Tis pity that they did not, and that somebody skilled in shorthand was not on hand to report their talk ; for men say things in the intimacy of speech which they would shrink from chronicling in cold, hard print, and these two, both experts in ring-lore, both lovers of the Noble Art, would pretty certainly have said things that the world, or some not inconsiderable part of it, would not willingly have let die. This, however, did not happen ; so that one refers to it only as another notable Might-Have-Been, and passes on to the consideration of Thormanby as he is. This done, one finds that his heart is in his work, and he really has things to say : one of which is that Borrow pitched his pæan in praise of pugilism in a key perhaps too high. His own *apologia*, all the same, is by no means wanting in spirit ; and he reels you off a list of English worthies who have loved the Ring which only fails of its effect by being incomplete. Why did he not include, for instance, the Elegant Earl Grey ? And the Dukes of Kent and Clarence ? And the sole and only Duke—the Duke of Wellington ? And Barclay of Urie, the admirable and inventive athlete ? And John Hamilton Reynolds, the friend of Keats, author of that excellent sonnet to Jack Randall :—

' Good with both hands and only ten stone four ' ?

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And Keats himself, the Poet of Beauty? And Byron, the Poet of Passion and Revolt, an original member of the Pugilistic Club, a confirmed and ardent amateur. And Yarmouth—'Red Her-rings,' so they called him, from the colour of his whiskers—who presently sat to Disraeli for the Earl of Monmouth and to Thackeray for the Marquis of Steyne, and who beat the Regent dreadfully for proposing to substitute Lady Yarmouth for that Marchioness of Hertford who was nothing if not her husband's mother? And Kean, the portent, the miracle, the prodigious actor, who found (they say) one of the finest effects in the unquenched fury of a beaten 'pug'? Why, in fact, did he not name near everybody worth knowing in the Regency and later Georgian days? Pugilism was then the pastime of all good Englishmen;¹ and over a big fight, which would be witnessed by some five-and-twenty thousand roaring citizens, there would change hands sums of money not to be stated under six figures. The Ring, in fact, had so far entered into the national life that it seemed to be a vital and essential part therein. It had begun with

¹ There is never a big Scots boxer on the roll of fame; and if the Irish be many, there is but one of them, so far as I know, who takes imperial honours; and Jack Randall (for he it was), Randall the Nonpareil, who fought and won fourteen battles, and 'died at the Hole in the Wall, Chancery Lane,' some four years after Byron, aged but thirty-four, was a London Irishman, 'a St. Giles's Greek'—what they now call a 'Bark'—was yet as dear to the general British heart as Cribb or Spring themselves. Randall it was who (in his fight with Turner: a fight which, by the way, was witnessed by Tom Moore, as the guest, or novice, of Scrope Davies and Mr. John Jackson) thrilled and enchanted by his brilliant practice the soul of John Keats, then (December 1818) the lover of Fanny Brawne and the poet of *Endymion* and *Isabella*, and beginning to work his hardest at *Hyperion*.

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Figg—‘Th’ heroical Figg so fierce and sedate’—in Hogarth’s time ; it had been passed from hand to hand by Broughton and Slack,¹ and Johnson and Brain, and Humphries and Mendoza and John Jackson ; till, at the beginning of the present century, Jem Belcher was and deserved to be an English hero, and when Gully fought Gregson (1808) Earl Grey sent on the result of the battle to his colleague, Windham, in a ministerial despatch-box, by a ministerial courier. *Redit et virgo.* . . . ’Twas the Golden Age : the age of Pearce and the Belchers, and Cribb the solid Englishman, and Dutch Sam, the drunken yet terrific Jew. To Thormanby, as to myself, this is all hearsay and tradition ; but he comes to his subject with, I should fancy, a pretty full knowledge of those dreadful later years, in which it was shown that pugilism meant blackguardism, and that for one decent fighter there was a wilderness of scoundrels. In the end the institution was redeemed, in a kind of way and to some extent, by the piety of poor Tom Sayers ; in the interval much brilliant work had been put in by such men as Dick Curtis and Young Dutch Sam, as Deaf Burke and Owen Swift and Hammer Lane—to name no more ; such survivals as Jem Ward, Gully (worth a chapter in himself), Spring, Tom Belcher, Mr. Jackson, lived in a sort of rough-and-tumble odour of sanctity, and went abroad in something very like a halo till they died. But the Ring was doomed—had doomed itself ; and the Ring died ; and at its death there were few mourners. According to ‘fierce old

¹ ‘ J’en passe et des meilleurs.’

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Cobbett'—and Borrow, who quotes, is not indisposed to agree—the mischief began with the Jews. It may be so. They had some good men of their own—Mendoza, Dutch Sam and his boy, Belasco, Barney Aaron. But it may be so. I know not. What is certain is that, if the Jew began it, the Gentile was quick to take up the work of corrupting, and in the long-run there was little or nothing to choose between the two.

'All fights are good reading,' says Mr. Saintsbury, superbly—not to say despotically: the truth being that there is scarce an intelligible record in all the literature of fisticuffs. In *Boxiana* the reports are mere jargon and false fire—a horrible confusion of terms.¹ Jon Bee, in *The Fancy*, is 'not so bad,' as they say; but even his reports, though you think you sometimes know what he means, are cloudy and vague. There are notes in the latter pages of *Pugilistica* which are helpful, being decent reporting. But, in point of fact, no fights are good reading but those which occur in literature. After all, there is little use in reporting. Your fight is a thing psychical as well as physical. It is logical throughout, and its logic is both visible and unseen: the mere cataloguing of hits on the nose (or eye, or ear, or anywhere) is not much to the purpose. Hence the apparent imbecility of *Boxiana*, the strenuous ineffectualness of Jon Bee, the failure, as history and as art, of *Pugilistica*. Poor Pierce Egan goes on—goes on! But if only Byron had

¹ I came to the conclusion, long since, that Pierce Egan knew a certain amount of slang, was innocent of every other kind of knowledge, and never *saw* anything in his life.

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set his hand to the work, and told us of Belcher and Pearce, or—still better—of Belcher and Cribb! If only Keats had set down in prose his impressions of the Randall and Turner business! Some details he sketched to Cowden Clarke; but O, if he had but pulled off the picture: as Mr. Morrison has done in *Three Rounds*,¹ or better still, perhaps—for the three rounds are fought under difficulties and in uncommon circumstances—in the scrap so masterfully presented in *A Child of the Jago*. There is a good turn-up in *Kenelm Chillingly*: a dim old-fashioned novel which, I fear, is practically unknown to the most of those who, referring to these pages, read what, in the first Lord Lytton's days, a writer on pugilism would have thought he was familiar and comic if he wrote 'this here.' And there is excellent stuff in *Cashel Byron's Profession*—a novel written by Mr. Bernard Shaw in the days when (so far as I know) he also was a mere artist,² as were, and are, these others also. Thormanby, too, is an artist in his way. I like him when he writes—(apparently 'out of his own stomach': a coarse metaphor, but I am writing about pugilism)—about Hammer Lane and Yankee Sullivan—(Lane broke his arm, yet all but won the fight)—about Owen Swift and Brighton Bill—(in the sequel the Brightonian died): about everything, in fine, which he may very well have seen. But I like him still better when he is trying to make literature, and

¹ *Tales of Mean Streets* (London: Methuen).

² 'Tis a delightful book—a treat of wit and insight, amusing morals and right impudence; and I should like it known of all them that read the present essay.

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producing the net result of the confidences of others as to things he never saw. Thus, as to Cribb and Molineaux, he shows plainly that, in the first fight, the nigger was very badly used, and that, at a given moment, Cribb was a beaten man. Thus, too, he is constrained, as all must be constrained who take up the study of the P.R., to break ground with Jem Belcher, the sole and only man of genius who ever fought in the Ring.¹ Nothing, of course, will ever give us any idea of this astonishing creature: his face—(not unlike the Young Napoleon's) struck terror to his opposites, and reminded Egan of 'a renowned military character on the Continent'; his unaccountable, irresistible hands; his gaiety, valour, *prestance*; his original and entirely inimitable method, his practice of which was so thrilling that, to quote old records, you knew not when nor where nor how he had hit until you saw the

¹ Says I, one night, to my friend Professor — I dare not give his name, without asking his permission; but I doubt not that he'll rage when he sees it left in blank. Says I to him, one night, in a balcony at Barnes, with 'the old Father-River' having his will of us twain, and of all souls born, or fallen into his dominion, in full view: 'There are but two men in the history of the P.R. whom we can call absolutely and utterly first-rate, and they are——' 'Belcher and the Nonpareil,' he says to me; and I was left wondering. Since then, I've seen that inspiration *plus* accomplishment is better than accomplishment *plus* instinct; and that his list of two should be shortened by one, and that one not Jem Belcher.*

* Dr. Knapp, Borrow's editor, writes thus:—'Not the old Belcher, him of 1791.' And I confess I know not what he means. Jem Belcher, the greatest fighter that ever lived, was not born in 1791; nor did he fight in 1791; nor did he die in 1791; nor in fact, did he, so far as I can discover, do anything in 1791—when, by the way, he was but ten years old. He was, in fact, only eight years Byron's senior; and he did for the Ring what Byron did for English morals.

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effects of his hitting. That Thormanby begins his *Boxers and their Battles*, some ninety years after poor Belcher's death and burial (1811), is enough to show how tremendously he has ever bulked in the imagination of them that have studied their P.R. But Thormanby is only one of ever so many who have taken this thrice-beaten hero to their hearts. Beaten? He never was beaten, says Jon Bee. The Belcher who, being at the top of fame, and the top of life, had his eye beaten out by a racquet ball, and from being invincible became ——! Says Jon Bee:—‘The real Belcher was never beaten; he couldn't be beat.’ This, or words to this effect. As told by Thormanby, the story of his defeats—the abolished eye the chief factor in them—suggests Napoleon and the campaign of 1814. He was bound to be licked; and licked he was. But he was licked in such a way that men went to him in his defeats to learn how to come upsides with Victory.

BALZAC AS HE WAS

THE men of 1830 have been taxed with insincerity ; and the reproach is merely just. There was none of them but would be a Byron, even though, to compass his ambition, he must do for himself what the world did for the poet of *Parisina* and *Harold* and *The Giaour*, and carefully contrive his own legend. Dumas and Berlioz wrote their Memoirs, and very delightful books they are ; and *bien fol qui s'y fie*—if it be question of anything but their delightfulness. Hugo went further. He did his utmost to develop a legendary Brow as well as a legendary Hugo, and set himself, being something of a Hercules, to the great work of going down to posterity as very much of an Apollo. Balzac's ideal Balzac was as none of these others. Despite the famous Stick—the stick which set half Europe talking ; despite the *loge des tigres*—that box at the Opéra to win the *entrée* to which Maxime de Trailles, and Rastignac, and la Palférine themselves would have had to produce their credentials—despite, I say, the dandyism which he affected, and the habit of supreme society which sat so ill upon his heroes and so very much worse upon their creator—despite the confidences of mysterious and nameless ladies, who, suffering in silence and à

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l'ombre, were moved to appeal to him for counsel, sympathy, hope—Balzac resolved to impose himself upon posterity as an embodiment of (1) Debt, (2) Work, (3) Chastity, and (4) Sentiment. How far he succeeded with the world at large I cannot pretend to say. I can, however, protest, and solemnly, that for years (and they were pretty bad years, too), I lived upon his legend. I saw him in his garret—toiling, toiling ; steaming with Intellect and Will ; producing fifteen times over, breaking the hearts of compositors, ruining the eyes and the moral characters of readers for the press ; striving, magnificent and enormous, like Porthos at Belle-Isle, against burdens of achievement too great for mortal man to bear ; and doing it all on black coffee, and alone—alone ! Never the ghost of a petticoat (I thought), never the possibility, the shadow, the dream (even) of a kiss ! Work, and then work, and work again ; and black coffee, and a few hours' sleep ; and then more work, and more black coffee ; and days that were Italian Campaigns in the matter of getting money ; and nights that were Jenas and Ulms in the matter of expression and conception ; and a head that steamed—steamed ; and—never a woman in the whole wide world ? Not one ! till you came to be Daniel d'Arthez, and then you fell in with the Princesse de Cadignan (sometime Diane de Maufrigneuse) ; and she went for you ; and, elderly as you both were, you . . . But let me not anticipate ! Enough to note, here and now, that that was Balzac's ideal, as adumbrated in the *Comédie humaine* :—

'The new edition fifty volumes long' :—

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and as preached to those young men—as Théophile Gautier—who came within range of his overpowering and bewildering personality. I was one of these. I was born the year before he died ; but I lived in his work—neck and shoulders deep in it—for years ; and for years I read the Balzac of Legend with the Balzac of the *Comédie*. Then I began to know better and to see clearer. And now I can, and do, laugh at my old Ideal as cheerfully and as whole-heartedly as I can, and do, laugh at myself—his victim for so long.

There is no doubt that he worked ; worked like a harvester, like a Titan, like a William Shakespeare even ; for have we not those wonderful effects in intuition, which are also those incredible achievements in presentation, the ninety-odd masterpieces which make up the several sections of the *Comédie* ? And behind all these are there not the three *dizains* of the *Contes drolatiques*, and in these three tens are there not a dozen stories—as *la Connétable*, and *Berthe la repentie*, and *le Péché-vénial*, and *le Succube*, and *Persévérance d'amour*—which would suffice for immortality to any one but Balzac. Work ? O yes : that he worked, and worked, and killed himself with work, there is no doubt at all. Scott worked, too ; but he worked easily, joyously, carelessly ; and we love and revel in his loose but consummate achievement. To Balzac every page of copy meant heaven knows how many slips of proof ; so that, while Sir Walter, conscious of his own weight and strength and *prestance*, and caring little or nothing for style, would take on his

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printers, even after weeks of colic,¹ with a super-human equanimity, Balzac is conscious, as he writes, that this that he is writing, or rather this that he is striving to write, is the imperfect thing—is not the half of that he wishes to tell (over his signature) to the world. So he gets to work ; and set after set of proofs is ruined and recast and rewritten ; and in the end everything is five or six times re-achieved. I say 'five or six,' because I wish to be credible ; but if we are to believe himself, the statement is utterly inadequate. His *Pierrette*, for instance, cost him thirteen sets of proofs and thirteen rewritings ; his *Birotteau*, seventeen sets of proofs and seventeen rewritings ; and so with the rest. The effort is so prodigious, the outcome so magnificent, that you are neither displeased nor surprised to find him likening himself, as he gladly does, to Napoleon. There, in effect, he sits—sits in his white monk's frock : distilling corruption ; inventing characters, stories, facts, societies, moralities, philosophies, religions ; producing Vautrins and Séraphitas with an equal interest in the result, an equal constancy in the process of creation ; ranging between heaven-high (as he conceives of heaven) and hell-deep with an imperturbable assurance, an irresistible persuasiveness, an incomparable power. And at fifty, or so, he dies ; and you may reflect that, if he'd never been, the world of Fiction were the poorer by something like two thousand figures of men and women, and by not a few of the most

¹ As with *The Bride of Lammermoor* : dictated to Laidlaw when, what with pains and fomentations and dictations, the noble creature knew not what he had done.

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notable stories ever made. Yes : as I said before, there is no doubt that he *worked* ; as there is none that his *œuvre* is *aere perennius*, at the same time that it is unique in human achievement.

It is another-guess matter with his Debts, and of these I shall say no more than that Léon Gozlan (the Nathan of the *Comédie*), who knew him intimately, declined to believe in their existence, and insisted, more or less, that they were his day-dreams, his illusions, the sole 'enchanted cigarettes' which he permitted himself to smoke. 'Tis the same, but a great deal more flagrant and more demonstrable, with that other article of faith—his Chastity. He preached the virtue with a most constant mouth ; and with a most constant heart he declined to practise it. M. de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, who knows his Balzac like the clock, is careful to note that the affectation of continence was an essential element in Balzac's *pose*, and remains an essential feature in Balzac's legend. It is the merest imposture ; yet the great man, 'in his many *aventures d'amour*' (S. de L.), was solicitous, even resolute, to maintain it. From two-and-twenty onwards he was the *protégé* of a certain Mme. de B—— : 'la *dilecta*,' he calls her : who, being twice his age, and almost beyond experience credulous, motherly, sisterly, kind, was such an influence in his life that after her death he was never quite the same. But a Mme. de B., however she 'fill the bill' when one is two-and-twenty and a nobody, is apt to be superfluous when one is two-and-thirty, and withal the author of *le Chat qui pelotte*, and *la Vendetta*, and *les Chouans*, and the *Peau de chagrin*, and *la*

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Physiologie du mariage. By that time other women, veiled or not, sincere or not, curious certainly, had come upon the scene. By that time, in fact, the Hysteric—the Lady-Errant, if you will: the Woman who Wants to Know—had realised that here was her Confessor-General; of whom she might ask such questions as she would, and to whom she might look for such answers as she was prepared to receive. It is, I take it, to the credit of Balzac's arch-illusion that, whatever the *cliente's* name, she was positively assured that She, and She only, was Woman to him: that, apart from Her, life was a desperate round of copy, proofs, black coffee, debts, and six hours' sleep out of the twenty-four. That She believed it is improbable; but 'tis certain that Balzac went on saying it. Meanwhile, the dedicatee of *Eugénie Grandet* brought him a daughter; friends of his knew of a son and of yet another daughter—both dead within the last few years; so late as 1846, a girl child, 'née à six mois,' declared herself in circumstances so moving that, according to M. de Lovenjoul, 'les rapides progrès' of Balzac's 'maladies de cœur' were 'dus en partie à cette terrible aventure.' We know not precisely what this means. What we do know is that the 'Maria' of *Eugénie Grandet*—'la plus naïve créature qui soit . . . qui vient chez moi en cachette, n'exige ni correspondance ni soins, et qui dit: "Aime-moi un an, je t'aimerai toute ma vie"'—was no more Balzac's 'only She' than the 'dilecta' herself, or than that Mme. la Marquise de Castries, who, 'quoique voluptueuse comme mille chats,' was, Balzac told his sister, 'ni gracieuse

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ni femme.' What we know, too, is that, however many uniques there were, Balzac, braggart and vocal as he was in all other relations of life, was careful to compromise no one of them. On the contrary, 'Blessed are the pure in fact,' he said, 'for they alone shall do enduring work.' It was an excellent device. He made his legend, and behind it did as he would. In reality he was the jovial Tourangeau of *les Contes drolatiques*. In the public eye he was the creator of Mme. de Mortsauf and the Bennassis of *le Médecin de campagne*, the author of *Eugénie Grandet*, and *le Curé de village*: a great artist, a great moralist, a great satirist; a worker so obstinate and so energetic that he had no time in which to be adventurous—no time, in fact, for anything but proofs and copy, copy and proofs—copy and proofs, and black, black coffee, and never a petticoat from one book's end to another's. And his *clientes*, his women (if I may use the phrase) 'played up.' It is a mistake to suppose that Nora Helmer always slams the door behind her when she goes forth to find herself. The Nora Helmers who came and went about Balzac knew a trick worth two of that. They discovered themselves at home, and went abroad, as in the ordinary run of things, to get their discovery confirmed. That is the great, the essential, difference between Nora Helmer and (say) the Duchesse de Langeais. This, however, is by the way. The thing to insist on is that all they who went to Honoré de Balzac for certificates of self-discovery got plenty of Sentiment from him, and were happy. What the sentiment was worth they only know who have compared his *Lys dans la*

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vallée (let us say) and his stories of the building of Azay-le-Rideau and the humours of King Louis XI.

I take it, then, that Balzac the *féministe*, Balzac the *amateur des femmes*, was, despite his amazing flow of sentimental fancy and speech, severely practical. Yet the great affair of his life was largely an affair of Sentiment and the Fine Shades, and it was this, in the very prime of his life and fame, to perform such a scamper through the *Pays du tendre* as few men have achieved and survived. It began in 1832, when he was thirty-three years old, and its inspiration was a lady who signed herself 'Une Étrangère,' and whose letter bore the postmark of Odessa. That letter, I believe, is lost. Lost or not, it had its effect on Balzac's life and Balzac's mind, and was, in fact, the beginning of a connexion that ended only with Balzac's death. It seems to have been of no particular merit; but it was anonymous, it reproached the poet with the cynicism of the *Peau de chagrin*, it insisted that he should return to the purer atmosphere of the *Scènes de la Vie privée*; and, as I have said, it immensely impressed the recipient, who seems to have set to work to knock up a passion as soon as ever he had received and read. Came a second (acknowledged in the *Quotidienne*, and thereby establishing in France what is known to us as the Agony Column), and a third; and then, nobody knows how, the nympholept was bidden to Neuchâtel. He had already sought to mark his appreciation of the Étrangère's attentions by essaying to dedicate (with an appropriate date) a certain *novelle* 'Diis ignotis,' and had been foiled of his intent by the '*dilecta*,' who was

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in the habit of reading his proofs, and who made him suppress the dedication and the sheet in which it appeared ; and for this reason and others he had to invent a pretext for leaving Paris which would serve him at once at home and abroad. He was equal to the occasion, and repaired to Neuchâtel. There are two accounts of the meeting. One is, that he found her reading Balzac, looked at her, was recognised, and was instantly honoured with what Browning calls 'the blessing of embrace' ; another, that the lady, having recognised, was disgusted by the squatness, the drover-like aspect, the general commonness in effect of her adored Master, and that he had to put forth his best to prove that he was essentially the Balzac of her dream. Whichever we accept, it is certain that Balzac was, so to say, clean bowled by the Étrangère's first ball. Writing to his sister, he gives such an account of the business as might come from the author of the *Physiologie du mariage* : in the course of which he touches off Mme. de Castries and the '*dilecta*,' owns that a certain 'simple et délicieuse bourgeoise'—the Maria of the *Grandet* dedication—has made him a father, enumerates the new woman's points, talks of 'le dammé mari,' notes that 'à l'ombre d'un chêne s'est donné le furtif baiser premier de l'amour,' and then, physiologist of marriage—cynic, ribald, practical amorist—as he is, proceeds to give himself away with both hands. 'Puis,' says he, 'comme notre mari s'achemine vers la soixantaine, j'ai juré d'attendre, et elle de me réserver sa main, son cœur.' No schoolgirl ever showed so much facility—no schoolboy such a

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superb capacity for surrender! Yet this was soon to be the Balzac of *Goriot* and the *Illusions perdues* and *la Fille aux yeux d'or*! This was the creator of la Palférine, and de Marsay, and Corentine, and Rastignac, and Mâme Nourrisson, and the Mlles. Goriot, and Frémiet, and Gobseck, and Vautrin, and Valérie de Marneffe, and Philippe Bridau, and Crevel, and Hulot—the great all-father of corruptions, the Homer (as it were) of whatever is vilest and most artful in fiction! If it were not true, 'twould be incredible—would it not?

It was a Polish lady—a Mme. Hanski or Hanska—who did this feat. She was five-and-twenty years her husband's junior, but had had several children by him, of whom but one survived. Balzac saw the Hanskis again at Geneva, and yet again at Vienna; and in the space between and for years to come he 'reeled it off.' She was his 'chère épouse d'amour,' his 'ange adoré,' his 'ange idolâtré,' his 'cher trésor en bonheur,' his 'chère noble âme,' his 'belle et noble maîtresse,' 'ma grande souveraine, ma fée, ma femme,' his 'chère lumière du monde'; and his refrain is 'Adoremus in æternum.' The Man of the Fine Shades has his chance, and goes for it through letter after letter, with all the strength that is in his big, subtle, seething, teeming brain. With the years, though, the nympholept changes his tone, and gets into another key. M. de Hanski seems to have seen elucubrations of his, and to have been by no means pleased with them. Balzac's apologies to 'notre mari' are things to read, especially in their place among the letters. M. de Hanski is wholly in error, it ap-

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pears. The fact is, Mme. de Hanska had remarked one day, in Balzac's hearing, that she had never had a love-letter in her life ; and Balzac had written these things of which M. de Hanski complains, in pure friendliness, just to show her what love-letters are like ! I do not think that 'notre mari' was altogether so credulous as his would-be 'Minotaur' would have liked him to be. In any case, Balzac the nympholept goes under, and his room is filled by Balzac the Writer, Balzac the Adventurer, Balzac the Man of Debts, the behemoth of Chastity, the leviathan 'pour copie conforme.' His illusions are with him first and last ; so that some of his letters, if you could but believe him, would read tragically enough. But belief in him is impossible. These letters of his to Mme. Hanska are plainly the outcome of a strong delusion. I do not doubt that they helped him in his struggle with life and time. But I would not, for all their particularity, hang any one of my cats upon their testimony.

He is always going to Russia ; but somehow he never goes. He has a dozen volumes to write, three stories to finish, ten or twenty thousand francs to raise, an illness the result of months of overwork—(but for his Chastity, his doctor tells him, he had been a dead man!)—to recover from ; and he never goes. He can find time for Sardinia ; he can make none for the Ukraine. So it goes on till 1841, when M. de Hanski died ; and in 1842 Balzac journeyed to Russia. They were not married, however—he and his Eve—till the April of 1850 ; and between 1841 and 1851 there is, as we have seen, a marking date—even 1846. For the rest,

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the marriage seems to have been none of the best. Balzac died some three or four months after the event ; and Victor Hugo (in *Choses vues*) has told us how he died, and where was Mme. de Balzac when death took him away. Thus passes the Sentimentalist, the man who insists on seeing life other than it is, and on making facts other than they are. His widow was not of his kidney ; and when she died, some years ago, she had recognised her true place in time, and was not even her husband's widow, but a figure which Balzac would have loved to study and to present : among the grimmest in the *Comédie*.

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WHEN Renan says of Nero that he had 'the intellect of one of Victor Hugo's heroes,' he strikes a shrewd blow at Hugo as well as at Didier and Ruy Blas, at the poet of *les Orientales* and *la Légende* as well as at Gwynplaine and Hernani and Jean Valjean. For a man's heroes are that part of his work which he loves best, and on which—

Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself—

he lingers with the most complacency. Now, it was written of Hugo—by no less an artist in criticism than Heine—that somewhere or other, on this part of his person or on that, he had, however artfully dissembled, a hump—a malformation which insisted on getting itself manifested in everything he did; and it was written of Hugo's heroes—by no less an expert in character than Thackeray—that they were monsters all: creatures with humps, who might not be measured by the standards in use among ordinary human beings. Both these opinions are irrefragable. Hugo's heroes *are* monsters, and they are monsters because Hugo had a hump: not a hump physical, as Heine was so

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malevolent as to suggest, but a hump moral and spiritual, which hump its owner could not choose but bestow upon the several creatures of his fancy. One and all, they are expressions of sentiment gone wrong ; and as the name of Hugo's hump—which is Hugo's master-quality—was Insincerity, they are one and all impossible and incredible. There are times when Hugo, if he were not true to fact, if he had not lived and moved and had actual being, would seem incredible and impossible as the most personal of his own creations. One might say of him, with perfect truth, that life for him was one long sequence of attitudes, all exaggerated, and each one nothing if not conscious and deliberate. All were cleverly conceived and done, for Hugo (his genius apart) was in some ways an uncommonly clever fellow : a man with a keen eye for the main chance, an extraordinary feeling for Number One, and a very natural resolve to make the most he could by (as well as of) an unrivalled technical endowment. But all were attitudes, and now there is none but recalls that saying of Renan's with which I begin this Note.

Of what size and quality, in effect, are the intellects of Hugo's heroes? And in what degree do they differ from Hugo's own? The answer consists in another question :—Is it possible to conceive of *Hernani* or of *Ruy Blas* with any brains but the shallowest? I do not think it is. *Hernani* is a fool positive ; or the Horn would leave him cold, and there would be no play. *Ruy Blas* is a fool positive ; or he would make no more of *Don Salluste* than of the dust under his foot, and again

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there would be no play. That both Ruy Blas and Hernani are in all other respects impossible—that they are as false to history as they are false to nature—has nothing to do with the present contention. They are good enough Hugo to be typical Hugo ; and the sole conclusion possible about them is that they have only the very rudiments of brains, and that what in human beings is called character is shown in them as an instinctive and overmastering capacity for attitude. They have, that is, the qualities and the defect of their creator. They have presence, rhetoric, music, colour, a certain flamboyancy in inverisimilitude. But they are also liars born and made : they are hard put to it to mean a word they say. Or, if they be not liars, and if it be expected of you that you take their utterances for gospel, then are they the worst witted and the most helpless impostors that ever foisted themselves upon a thrice-gullible public. And here their creator meets and beats them on their own ground ; and, in the long-run, one is left gasping at the spectacle—of assurance, ignorance, insincerity, and sham superiority—which, thanks to his abounding lyricism, his magnificent temperament, and his scarce less magnificent capacity for expressing his *néant*—the Bottomless Pit that was innate, essential Hugo—in brilliant and sonorous verse, in antithetic and fanciful prose, he contrived to offer to the world until the end.

Attitude—attitude—and again and always attitude : in the beginning, as in the end, attitude and an almost unnatural mastery of rhythm and speech. That is the secret of his success, that the explanation

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of the hold he had upon his lieges and the world. His ignorance runs deeper than ever plummet sounded ; so that his *Cromwell*, his *Marie Tudor*, his *l'Homme qui rit*—to name but these—might stand, were they not already forgotten, for monuments of human impudence at the same time that they are achievements in human nescience. For (be it noted) he is always careful to insist upon the variety and the extent of his reading : he knows his public thoroughly, and he knows—and here is the cleverness which distinguishes his *pose*—that his public is even less bookish than himself, and will take his learning for granted *because* he insists on it, and *because* he writes good verses. He believes in his learning as Didier in the authenticity of Marion de l'Orme's new-made virginity : because he will, and there is none to say him nay. And his egotism is so vigorous that he has no eye and no ear and no suspicion of the vengeful Muse of History, whose servants will presently come down upon him, upset all his facts, make hay of his conclusions, and demonstrate that, whatever he may have known of character and life, he knew absolutely nothing, for all his solemn and imposing countenance and his 'austere regard of control'—nothing, I say, of history, nothing of books, nothing of anything excepting the fact that he, Hugo, was superior to facts and rules, and that, for the moment at least, he spoke as one inspired, and might, without fear of questioning, say anything he would. It was not for nothing that he called himself Olympio ; wrote his own life—or dictated it to his wife ; and insisted that (in the words of 'our immortal Chiggle, sir'),

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his Brow was more than mortal.¹ He was so self-satisfied, he had so little sense of humour, that he thought it all true, and struck such attitudes as seemed appropriate to his occasions in the full belief that, inasmuch as they were his, they were removed beyond criticism. In a sense he was justified of himself ; for it is demonstrable to the hilt that he made such verses as no Frenchman had ever made, and had, besides, such a temperament as has been matched, I think, by none but our Mr. Gladstone's within the memory of man. Had the blind gods but given a touch of conscious fun to either, how much richer had they left the world in fact and how much poorer in occasions to scoff ! It is told of Victor Hugo that, being taken in *flagrante delicto*, by an outraged husband and a Commissaire in a tri-coloured scarf, he was subjected to a formal *interrogatoire*, and that, being attired in the costume which is usual at such passes in human existence, he responded to the question as to his status exactly as Ruy Blas or Didier or Gwynplaine or Hernani or Ruy Gomez would have answered, in these noble words : 'Monsieur, je suis pair de France !' Is there such an entire and perfect chrysolite of fatuousness in all the history of genius ? He was a *pair de France*, you see, and, being a *pair de France*, as much above and beyond the law which governs

¹ 'Il avait en lui beaucoup de l'Hercule' : thus M. Rodin to the present writer and to R. L. S. as we were considering his magnificent bust of Hugo. Now, the said bust is rather Herculean than Apollonian : the Brow, that is, is sacrificed to the back-head, which, in Hugo, as in Gladstone, was superb. The bust, therefore, was not accepted by the Family, nor was Rodin called in to take the poet's death-mask.

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grocers and coal-mongers and the like as Lauzun or Richelieu or Bassompierre. Does not the answer read as something straight from one of his own immortal works? Can you not see Frédérick dressing himself—‘très digne’—in whatever is handy, and taking the stage, to give it out with one of those gestures ‘as of an inspired windmill’ of which he had the secret; while Georges (or Mars, or Dorval) sobs, artfully denuded, L. C.? That, however, is Hugo the man and Hugo the maker of heroes. As the parodist, poor André Gill, once wrote:—‘Tout [Hugo] est là. Ou là. Là ou là? Tyrolienne. Passons.’ Add the lyrist of *les Orientales* and *les Contemplations* and *les Châtiments* and the rest, and you begin to understand the kind of effect he had upon his lieges and upon the world. It was Théophile Gautier, I believe, who said that he could not so much as think that Hugo had made a bad verse unless he were fathoms underground, in black darkness, utterly removed from human cognisance. Others were more critical and less loyal:—

Je l'admire vraiment.—Et franchement, personne
Ne me rappelle mieux, parfois, le mardi-gras.
Quel porteur d'oripeau ! quel faiseur d'embarras !
Et que souvent il pèse ! et quel creux rauque il sonne !

.
Nul n'a fait tant de vers ni si beaux ni si drôles :
Il est grand, il est bas ; il engraisse nos Gaules,
—Mais jusqu'à les crever !—d'un fumier précieux.

I should like to quote the whole sonnet, which is sound criticism throughout. But the gist of it is enough, and the ‘fumier précieux’ is said once and

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for all time. As for the antithesis—‘Il est grand, il est bas’—that also were demonstrable to the hilt. I need not note that, on the one hand, Hugo was a great lyric poet, and that, on the other, Hugo’s heroes are Hugo’s ideals—are Hugo’s conceptions of Hugo in certain circumstances, under certain conditions, and at grip with certain chances. Now, as Hugo’s heroes are all lackbrains, with a passion for attitude, and a temperament which sets them higher than right or wrong—are idiots, in short, or sentimental *rastaquouères*, or both—it follows that . . . Well, it follows that, given a certain endowment, a certain technical imagination, a man needs neither character nor intellect of the highest class to be a very considerable poet.

It was Got, himself a most intelligent man, who declared that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, you might state as incontrovertible the paradox that the more clever the man the worse the actor. Put the thing thus: the more clever the man *outside his work*, and you may apply Got’s test to most of the arts, and find that there is much to be said in its favour. Take painting, for instance. One has always heard that Claude was both illiterate and dull; yet are his landscapes of the noblest ever made. One hears little or nothing of Turner to make one sorry that one did not know him; yet one is told that his achievement is among the highest in all the range of art. For my part, I know nothing which gives me a greater sense of mastery, a fuller feeling of completeness, than a good Corot; but I have yet to read anything which shows that, outside his pictures, Corot was by so much as one degree

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removed from Colonel Newcome or Joe Gargery. Again, few better workmen than Courbet have practised painting since this century began ; yet Courbet *intime* was a puzzle-headed, gross, and rather drunken boor. Or take the case of music. Outside his instruments, Beethoven was wellnigh inarticulate ; and Beethoven is the greatest of them all. In literature it is other-guess work. Or rather, in literature it may be ; for the medium of literature is also the medium of science and philosophy, and withal, the means of expression common to all mankind ; and Shakespeare and Goethe and Dante are there to show that one may have all the brains that are going, and be the greater artist and poet for the possession. But it by no means follows that, because a man works in speech, and may say things at the same time that he is making poetry, he is poet and thinker both. For on the other side—remote from Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe—is Browning, who really was (they tell me) an infinitely clever fellow—a person with a brain of extraordinary range and subtilty—yet who chiefly lives as a kind of Shocking Case, an Awful Warning, an exemplar of everything the aspirant should not do. Decidedly, there is something in the old actor's theory. There is nothing more exquisite in literature than the best of Herrick—is there ? Yet who would 'pass his word for twopence' that Herrick had, outside his art, any more intelligence than the other country parsons of his time ? And is not Hugo the lyrist great and satisfying on the whole in spite of Hugo the intellect and the man ? Speaking in his own name, as an agent in human

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affairs, as an influence on human destiny, was he ever aught but fatuous? Who can think so? You may read Thackeray on his intercession with the existing King for a man's life in the early Thirties. It is painful reading, though apparently the few poor verses did their work. In 1871 he was issuing manifestoes to the Germans, urging on them the duty of sparing Paris and proclaiming the German Republic. He knew nothing when he began, that is; and he knew nothing when he ended. In the half-century between he had written many, very many delightful verses, with many, very many—an infinite array, in fact—of verses that are not delightful at all. At the last he approved himself a kind of poetry-machine, grinding out alexandrines and octosyllabics and all the other stuff of the trade as mechanically as Mr. Babbage's apparatus dealt with calculations. In all there are signs of the fecund and brilliant technical imagination which had been his from the first; in all there are notes of technical excellence which none living could equal. But in all there is so much of Heine's hump that to read *l'Art d'être grand-père* (let us say) is to be sick of children, and to wonder why persons without tact, without reticence, without any of the quality of *virtus*—that honourable and engaging quality!—should be gifted as Hugo was, and should be permitted, as Hugo was, to go on, year after year, degrading their endowment. That said, I hasten to add that I should dearly like to compile an anthology from Hugo's verse. 'Tis an impossible notion, of course; for was not everything he wrote inspired? And is not everything he wrote thrice

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sacrosanct? But I think that, supposing it were not impossible, I could make a book out of his eight-and-forty volumes that would live.

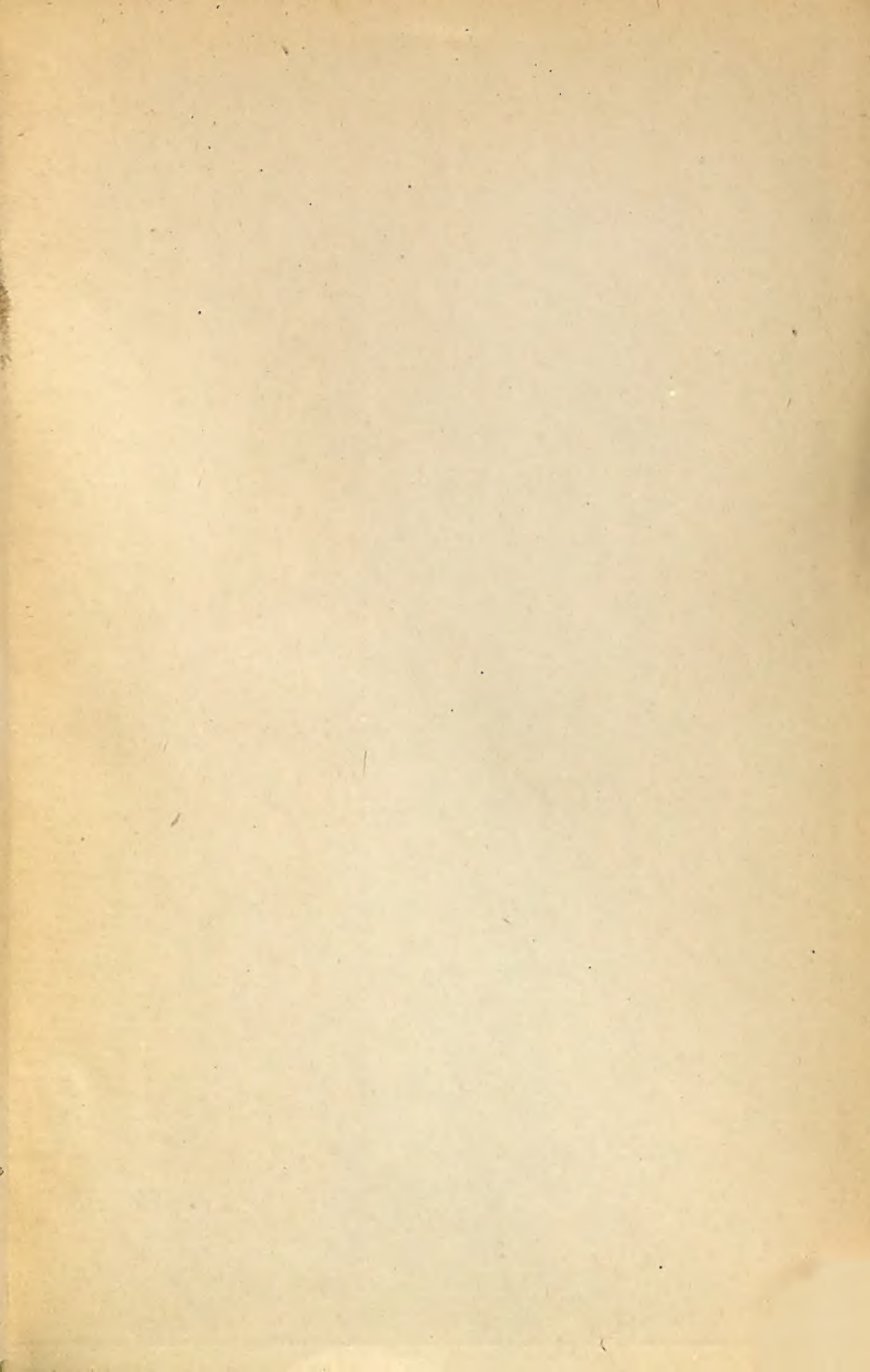
Out of his verse, of course—out of his verse! There is but one way to enjoy your Hugo; and that is to read his verses—here and there; and to leave his prose alone. If you read the verse you get the poet—often, and often, and very often. If you read the prose, you get the Bounder, the *rastaq*—I will not say ‘always,’ but more often than is good for your peace of mind. In the so-called *Memoirs*, you get very little else than the Bounder; and he does not emerge from the experience with anything like flying colours and a whole skin. There is here some quite magnificent blither about the Improper Person who loves the Robber:—

She was a harlot and he was a thief,
But they loved each other beyond belief:—

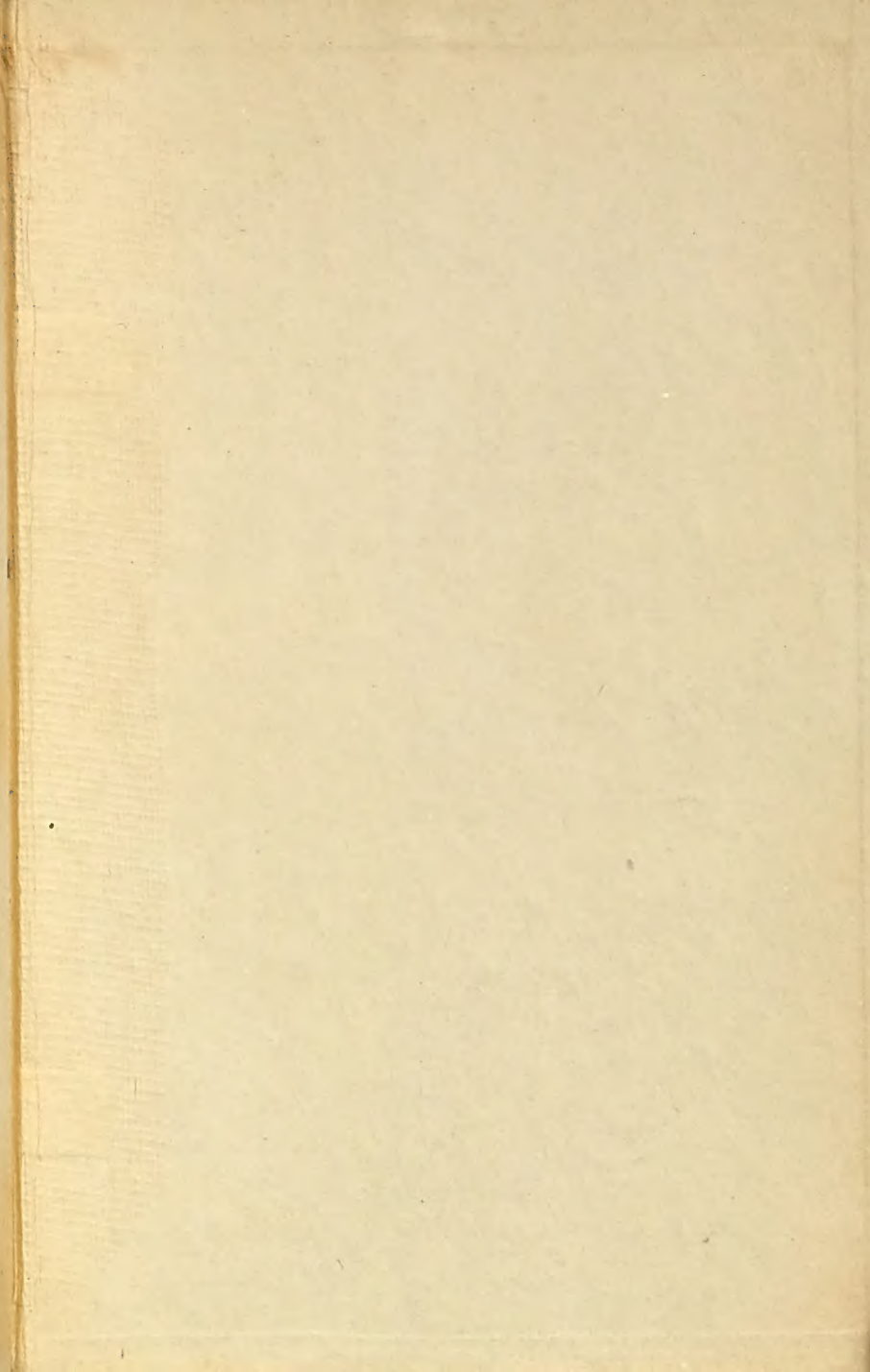
and how they live in divers cells of the subterranean Void; and how his Smile is hell-spoiled, but hers is tintured with the hues of heaven; and how there would be no harlots if it were not for human nature, and no thieves but for cruel and most unsentimental laws; and how, despite the efforts of God and Man and the Police, the Thief and the Harlot contrive to exchange ‘the kiss of azure.’ But the worst of all are the references during the Siege to ‘Little Jeanne.’ The whole business of the Siege—which Hugo thoroughly enjoyed—is an exhibition of the Heinesque *bosse*. But ’tis only when the poet takes on ‘Little Jeanne,’ and runs her (so to speak) in and with and between the bulletins—her caudle-

ESSAYS

cup among the cannon, her bib against the bayonets—that you see how essential, how indestructible was the sentimental *rastaq* in Victor Hugo, and how hard it is for decent people to have anything to do with him.



V/A



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Essays--Field

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